

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
His Second Visit to the West
New Discoveries

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

ADVAITA ASHRAMA

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NEW DISCOVERIES**

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By
MARIE LOUISE BURKE



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To

My revered teacher, Swami Ashokananda,
through whose own vastness of spirit I
learned to understand something of the
immeasurable greatness that was Swami
Vivekananda.

CONTENTS

	Publisher's Note	xvii
	Author's Note	xxi
ONE	Second Voyage to the West	1
TWO	England: An Interlude	48
THREE	Ridgely Manor: The Great Summer	94
FOUR	Southern California: A New Mission Begins	148
FIVE	Northern California: A New Gospel	276
SIX	A World Mission Draws to a Close	501
SEVEN	Homeward Bound	678
	Appendix	759
	Notes	764
	Bibliography	791
	Glossary	803
	Index	821

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO

Vedanta Society of Northern California

Between pages 112 and 113

SISTER NIVEDITA

Vedanta Society of Northern California

EDWARD T. STURDY

Vedanta Society of Northern California (Gift of
Mrs. Nelson G. Curtis)

RESIDENCE OF MRS. SAMUEL R. NOBLE, WIMBLEDON

Photograph taken by Eveline W. Fraser

HIGH STREET, WIMBLEDON

Photograph taken by Eveline W. Fraser

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (PASTEL BY MAUD STUMM)

Courtesy of Mme Paul Verdier

RIDGELY MANOR, c. 1890

Courtesy of Mrs. Frances Leggett

THE "LITTLE COTTAGE" AT RIDGELY

Courtesy of Mrs. Frances Leggett

GROUP ON CIRCULAR VERANDAH AT RIDGELY MANOR

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FRANCIS H. LEGGETT, c. 1897

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ALBERTA STURGES, c. 1896

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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WALTON PLACE FLAT, CHICAGO

Two photographs. Courtesy of Mrs. Herbert E. Hyde

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TO

MRS. OLE BULL, NOVEMBER 30, 1899

Courtesy of Mrs. Nelson G. Curtis

Facing page 130

ILLUSTRATIONS OF AN ARTICLE BY SWAMI KRIPANANDA

New York Herald, 1898

Facing page 222

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, SOUTH PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Advaita Ashrama

Between pages 224 and 225

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, MEAD'S HOUSE, SOUTH PASADENA

Advaita Ashrama

ECHO MOUNTAIN HOUSE FUNICULAR, MOUNT LOWE

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BLANCHARD HALL, LOS ANGELES

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MEADS' HOUSE, SOUTH PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Courtesy of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras

PICNIC GROUP IN RUBIO CANYON, CALIFORNIA

Two photographs. Courtesy of Mrs. Paul Cohn

PICNIC WITH SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, SOUTH PASADENA

Advaita Ashrama

UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

THE GREEN HOTEL, PASADENA

ILLUSTRATIONS

ECHO MOUNTAIN HOUSE, MOUNT LOWE, CALIFORNIA

THROOP POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, PASADENA

ASSEMBLY HALL, SHAKESPEARE CLUB, PASADENA, 1900

Courtesy of the Shakespeare Club, Pasadena

SHAKESPEARE CLUB, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Courtesy of the Shakespeare Club, Pasadena

Between pages 336 and 337

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO

Advaita Ashrama

NOTICE FOR SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S FIRST LECTURE IN SAN
FRANCISCO, FEBRUARY 18, 1900

San Francisco Examiner

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, c. 1900

1719 TURK STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

Two Views, Vedanta Society of Northern California

FLOOR PLAN OF FLAT AT 1719 TURK STREET

Drawn by Helen Sutherland

INTERVIEW WITH SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

San Francisco Examiner

Between pages 400 and 401

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO

Vedanta Society of Northern California

FRANK RHODEHAMEL

Vedanta Society of Northern California

DR. MILBURN H. LOGAN, c. 1890

The Bay of San Francisco, Chicago, 1892

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO

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TITLE PAGE OF *Raja Yoga, Six Lessons*

Vedanta Society of Northern California

ILLUSTRATIONS

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO

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EDITH B. ALLAN, c. 1902

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO (STANDING)

Vedanta Society of Northern California

REDMEN'S BUILDING, SAN FRANCISCO, c. 1900

California Historical Society, San Francisco

Between pages 544 and 545

HOME OF TRUTH, ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA, c. 1900

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN ALAMEDA, APRIL, 1900

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN ALAMEDA, APRIL, 1900

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HANDBILLS FOR LECTURES OF VIVEKANANDA

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CAMP IRVING, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Drawn by Robert Reed

KITCHEN AT CAMP IRVING, AUGUST, 1900

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CAMP TAYLOR HOTEL, c. 1900

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GROUP AT CAMP IRVING, SUMMER, 1900

Two Photographs. Vedanta Society of Northern California

CALIFORNIA STREET HOME OF TRUTH, SAN FRANCISCO

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DR. MILBURN H. LOGAN'S HOUSE, SAN FRANCISCO

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Facing page 666

SWAMI TURIYANANDA IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1900
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Between pages 736 and 737

PARIS EXPOSITION, 1900
Brown Brothers, New York

6, Place des Etats-Unis, Paris
Swami Vidyatmananda, Gretz, France

PALACE OF ELECTRICITY, PARIS EXPOSITION, 1900
Brown Brothers, New York

DR. LEWIS G. JANES, c. 1900
Courtesy of Mrs. Charles Lyttle

PÈRE HYACINTHE LOYSON, c. 1885

MME EMMA CALVÉ CROSSING THE DESERT
New York World, November 11, 1900
Courtesy of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta

Facing page 758

RAMAKRISHNA MATH, BELUR, c. 1900
Courtesy of Swami Abhayananda

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

When Marie Louise Burke's earlier book, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, was first published in 1958, it was hailed as a pioneering research work of a high order. The book brought joy to the admirers of Swamiji in that it revealed new and hitherto unknown facts of his life and also some of his unpublished teachings and letters. Besides, it presented 'pictures of the places where the Swami lived and worked and of the people he knew and loved and who helped him during his American visit'. The author was right in believing that Swamiji's 'devotees have long hankered for such visual reports'. The book also inspired scholars in India to undertake a new kind of research on Swamiji's life in India. In fine, the book created a stir. One had not to agree with all the views expressed by the author in interpreting Swamiji's life to be impressed by the fact that she had made a singular contribution to research on Swami Vivekananda.

Little perhaps did even the author know, in 1958, that in 1973 another voluminous work of hers on Swamiji would be published. But here it is today before all readers, the fruit of much patient search and devoted work. Her previous work pertained to Swamiji's first visit to America and the present volume is about his second visit to the West.

Readers of Swamiji's life have so far generally understood that his second visit to the West was meant for recouping his failing health, and that incidentally he also did some work, looked up friends, and inspected how work was going on in the places where he had laboured hard during his first visit to preach Vedanta and build the lives of earnest seekers.

Among others, one main contribution of the present book is that it marshals massive evidence to prove that even during his second visit to the West, Swamiji was as keenly devoted to doing 'Mother's work', for which his Master had commissioned him,

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

as he was during his first. From its pages Swamiji emerges as the illumined toiler who ceaselessly worked for man's advancement towards the fulfilment of his destiny. In fact, here one witnesses Swamiji rising again to the awe-inspiring heights of his ministry, unravelling the profound depths of his mission on earth, and uttering words of power, the promise of which has become the most precious spiritual heritage of man. As he spanned the sunlit firmament of his life and touched its magnificent evening, his power grew richer, and he became all the greater a giver. This aspect of Swamiji's life has rarely been spotlighted so well anywhere else as it has been here, with the help of documented evidence.

Readers will find that the author has narrated at length many facts and features of Swamiji's life that are already published and well known. They may wonder why these have been narrated at such length again, when 'new discoveries' were expected. But the nature of this work is such that the significance of the new discoveries can hardly be appreciated unless they are presented against the background of known facts. Besides, the author wanted to tell the complete story of Swamiji's second visit to the West, as far as it is known to date.

To the author no new information or detail about Swamiji's life, or any person, situation, place or thing in any way connected with it, is insignificant. Therefore her attempt has been to correlate all new discoveries with the mainstream of his life. This has called for the exercise of personal understanding and its expression in the form of interpretation and presentation of theories thought to be relevant in the context. In this regard she has been fair enough to mention in the 'Author's Note' that her interpretations are her own, and not necessarily those of the publisher or the Ramakrishna Order.

Any reader will be impressed by the author's spirit of dedication in completing a labour of love of such proportions and quality as the present book is. No one to whom the life and work of Swamiji mean anything can but be thankful to her.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We are also thankful to Swami Gambhirananda and Swami Chidatmananda, respectively the General Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, for their guidance and valuable suggestions in editing the manuscript.

In sending this book out into the world we have every hope that it will further stimulate the study and understanding of the life of Swami Vivekananda and his work for mankind.

Advaita Ashrama
Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas

AUTHOR'S NOTE

More than fifteen years have passed since the publication of *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*—too long a time to let go by before sharing these further findings about Swami Vivekananda's life in the Western world with his devotees. Yet for many of those years the present book has been in mind, and the research for it and the writing of it have been in a state of what one might call progress. For a long period it was slow progress indeed, punctuated by many interruptions and delays. Then in 1958 the work went suddenly ahead and for the next two years continued steadily. The typing of the final draft was completed on December 12, 1960, and I shall be forever thankful that this was so; for it was in time for him to whom this book is dedicated, and whose constant care and help made its writing possible, to know that it was done.

But perhaps more important to the reader than when this book was written is why it was written. As I mentioned in the preface to *New Discoveries*, during the writing of that book new material, both sought and unsought, began to pour in. Not all of it pertained to the work then at hand; much of it belonged to later periods of Swami Vivekananda's life in the West, and much of it called for other books. This volume is the first of those other books. It is not, however, the first in chronological order, for it does not begin in the spring of 1895, where *New Discoveries* left off, but jumps four years ahead.

As its main title indicates, it tells the story of Swami Vivekananda's entire second visit to the West from its start at Calcutta on June 20, 1899, to its finish at the Belur Math on December 9, 1900. But in fairness to the prospective reader, I should somewhat qualify this title, for while I have not neglected any episode of that visit, I have not dealt with all in equal detail. As I have seen it, the primary significance of Swamiji's second voyage to the West lies in the months he spent on the Pacific

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Coast, and the story of those months, accordingly, forms the heart of this book and constitutes its central, most detailed, and longest chapters.

The subtitle "New Discoveries" perhaps also needs some qualification. Unlike the earlier volume, this one is not concerned exclusively with the presentation of new information and material; rather, it deals with facts both previously known and heretofore unknown. Further, the new findings here presented are not so dramatic or extensive as those in the earlier books, for Swami Vivekananda's second visit to the West was less "cyclonic" and less publicly eventful than the first. Yet I believe the subtitle is justified, for I have had the good fortune of being able to present letters, memoirs, newspaper articles, and photographs that have not been generally known before. These not only are of interest in themselves, but serve to fill out the narrative of this period with many new details, all of which will, I hope, bring our picture of Swami Vivekananda into closer range and sharper focus.

Sometimes the reader will find that the newly found facts are at variance with those given in earlier histories. I have not always commented on these discrepancies or interrupted the narrative to support new findings—particularly if they are of minor significance—with long documentary or logical evidence. I assure the reader, however, that throughout the writing of this book I have done everything possible to be historically accurate in both large matters and small. Occasionally, of course, the facts could not be checked: time has either obliterated them or buried them too deep, and in such cases, when it has seemed safe and necessary, I have made a guess—always admittedly and without shame, for surely an occasional guess, if it is undisguised and able to stand on a firm support of reason, has a legitimate place in a biography.

In quoting from various sources, I have not always followed the paragraphing as given in the original; nor have I reproduced obvious typographical slips, the perpetuation of which could serve no purpose. Otherwise, I have reproduced every-

AUTHOR'S NOTE

thing just as it was, down to the last misplaced comma. I have refrained, however, from sprinkling quoted material with *sics*; instead, I give here a giant, all-encompassing sic as my best possible assurance that all errors in quotations were errors in the source.

For the benefit of Indian readers I have sometimes explained or defined things that to Western readers need no explaining or defining, and vice versa. I hope no one, East or West, will take offense at being thus informed of matters he was born knowing, such as that the Hudson River is in New York State or that *brahmacharin* generally means a novice in monastic life.

For the convenience of all readers, I have provided reference notes and a bibliography in the back of the book. I hope these will be useful, and in any case, they will serve as additional acknowledgment of my debt to various works from which I freely drew. But I would like also to express my special gratitude to those people who very generously and not without going to a good deal of trouble made a number of unpublished and invaluable records, letters, and other papers available to me.

To the authorities of the Ramakrishna Math at Belur I am much indebted for their kindness in making it possible for me to obtain copies of pertinent sections of the Math Diary, as well as copies of many of the letters of Sister Nivedita (then unpublished), and other material of much value to this work. My gratitude is also due to the late revered Swami Yatiswarananda and the Ramakrishna Math at Bangalore for kindly sending me copies of the correspondence between Swami Vivekananda and Edward T. Sturdy. I am equally indebted to Swami Prajnanananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math in Calcutta for making available to me relevant excerpts of the unpublished diary of Swami Abhedananda, various old newspaper clippings, and an unpublished letter of Swami Vivekananda. The authorities of the Vedanta Society of Northern California have also been most kind in allowing me to rummage unhindered through the Society's largely uncatalogued archives and storage files and to make use of whatever

AUTHOR'S NOTE

pertinent letters, memoirs, notes, photographs, and other memorabilia I might come across. Predictably, I came across much valuable material and have drawn upon it freely.

Among others to whom I owe a large amount of gratitude are Mrs. Charles Lyttle and the late Mrs. Edward T. Steel, daughters of Dr. Lewis G. Janes. Mrs. Lyttle and Mrs. Steel were more than kind in making available to me their father's letters written from France in 1900, as well as pertinent excerpts from his diary.

To Mrs. Paul Cohn, the daughter of Mrs. Alice Hansbrough, I am indebted for a pleasant interview and for details in connection with the house in Pasadena, California, where Swamiji lived for many weeks. To her I owe thanks also for the rare photographs of Swami Turiyananda and the Mead family, which, with her kind permission, I have reproduced in this book.

Mrs. Frances Leggett, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett and niece of Miss Josephine MacLeod, has also supplied information and material. In letters to me and in conversations, she kindly answered my many questions in regard to Ridgely. In addition, she has made available to me for inclusion in this book heretofore unpublished letters of Swami Vivekananda, one of which I have included in this book, four excerpts from other unpublished letters, and four photographs. Mrs. Leggett's permission to publish these excerpts and photographs is gratefully acknowledged.

To my friend and fellow devotee the late Mme Paul Verdier, who made available an unpublished letter of Swami Vivekananda, dated November 12, 1899, and who was always most generous in sharing with me many valuable memories of Swamiji, as told to her by her close friends Miss Josephine MacLeod and Mme Emma Calvé, I offer my sincere thanks, praying that she will hear and accept them.

Another friend whose help has been enthusiastic and invaluable is Mrs. Louise Douglas Hyde, the niece of Isabelle and Harriet McKindley. Mrs. Hyde has told me much about the

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Hale family and of her own childhood memories of Swamiji. She has also lent me many relevant photographs, some of which are published in *New Discoveries* and some in this book.

To Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu I am much indebted for his generosity in sending me before their publication in his forthcoming book *Letters of Sister Nivedita* a number of Sister Nivedita's letters which are not available elsewhere and which I have found of great help.

I want also to acknowledge my great debt to Swami Chidrupananda for his invaluable help in copying material from sources which were available only in India and which this book could not easily have done without.

Above all, I am indebted to Mrs. Nelson G. Curtis and Mr. Mortimer Smith, who have made available to me a rich store of letters from the papers of Mrs. Ole Bull. I owe them my truly inestimable gratitude.

I would like to say here that I am thankful not only for permission to use and quote from the unpublished sources mentioned above but also for permission to quote from published works. I have gratefully acknowledged all such permissions on a separate page, but I want especially to offer here my thanks to the President of Advaita Ashrama for his unqualified permission to quote from the various publications of Advaita Ashrama. I have taken full advantage of this generosity, quoting freely and extensively from, for instance, the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, and many issues of *Prabuddha Bharata*. I want also to express my special gratitude to Swami Prabhavananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, for giving me permission to quote from the magazine *Vedanta and the West* many passages which have added information, interest, and color to the narration of Swami Vivekananda's life during the period covered by this book.

I am indebted to many people for their personal help. In doing research there have been Mrs. John L. Dugdale of Sacramento, California, who searched carefully through the

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Los Angeles newspapers of 1900 for mention of Swami Vivekananda; Miss Eveline W. Fraser of London, who has provided snapshots of what was once Mrs. Samuel Richmond Noble's house in Wimbledon and who has verified certain facts in connection with Swami Vivekananda's 1899 visit to England; Miss Rachel Minick of New York, who searched out old letters of Miss Emma Thursby in the New-York Historical Society; and Mrs. Edith S. Hayes, who gave many hours to research connected with Swami Vivekananda's life in San Francisco and the East Bay.

The preparation of the typescript owes almost everything to a number of my fellow members of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, monastic and lay devotees alike, who painstakingly typed, copyread, and copy-edited its pages, who drew up the list of reference notes, searched public library catalogues for needed information, and who, in addition to their labor, gave as well the indispensable help of their endless interest and enthusiasm. My special gratitude is due to Kathleen Davis for preparing the glossary and index and in other ways giving me invaluable help, to Marion Langerman for typing the entire manuscript, and to Brahmacharini Chinmayi and Dorothy Murdock for their knowledgeable copyreading. To offer my thanks to all who worked so closely with me is perhaps presumptuous, for their work was done in devotion to Swami Vivekananda; yet my work could not have been accomplished without theirs, and my heartfelt thanks cannot easily be silenced.

I would like to offer my very respectful gratitude to revered Swami Gambhirananda, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order, who, in the midst of his many pressing duties, was kind enough to read carefully through the long typescript and to give me the benefit of his valuable suggestions and his most gracious encouragement. To Swami Budhananda, who as President of Advaita Ashrama is the publisher of this book, I am also particularly grateful for his thorough scrutiny of the text, and his many helpful suggestions for its improvement.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Finally, I would like to say with deep appreciation that this book would never have attained its present form had it not been for the painstaking care of Swami Smaranananda, Manager of Advaita Ashrama, who handled every phase of its production from start to finish, seeing it through the many difficulties and delays that inevitably attend the printing of a volume this size. I owe much gratitude as well to Swami Balaramananda of Advaita Ashrama, who played a very large part in piloting the book through the press.

In conclusion, I should say that I have given full rights to this book, including the rights of translation, to the Vedanta Society of Northern California. However, as was the case with *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, the opinions I have expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Society, nor are they necessarily those of Advaita Ashrama. But having said this, I earnestly thank both the copyright holders of this book and its publishers for accepting the text.

San Francisco

M. L. B.

CHAPTER ONE

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

1

In the late afternoon of June 20, 1899, Swami Vivekananda boarded the S.S. *Golconda* in the Hooghly River at Calcutta and began his second and last voyage to the Western world. He had no special plans in view. The thought that a large and fertile field of work would open up to him, that he would deliver a message of crucial importance, and that this trip would result in the establishment of Vedanta on the West Coast of the United States seems to have been far from his mind. There were, of course, reasons for the voyage: the primary one was the hope that it would improve his exceedingly poor health; another was his never-ending need to raise money for his Indian work.

The Swami was by no means unknown in the Western world. During his first visit there, which had extended from the middle of 1893 to the close of 1896, his name had become familiar to almost every newspaper-reading American. By some he had been loved and revered, by others, feared and reviled; but few, if any, had looked upon him with indifference. His talks at the august and celebrated Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in September of 1893, had revealed to an astounded American public the moral and spiritual grandeur of India's religious culture. He himself—his majestic presence, his keen wit and powerful intellect, his unmistakable and towering spirituality—had been no less an eye-opener. After the Parliament, the fame of the young Hindu monk (he was then thirty years old) had steadily increased, as had his influence. During the last months of 1893 and throughout most of 1894 he had traveled, lecturing, from place to place in the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

midwestern, southern, and eastern states of America. In 1895 and 1896 he had worked primarily in New York and London, teaching in both cities the basic ideals and practices of the Vedanta philosophy and religion and spreading the message of his great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, of whom he was the chief disciple and apostle.

Returning to India at the beginning of 1897, the Swami had given lavishly of his unlimited spiritual and intellectual powers in an attempt to restore the greatness of his beloved Motherland, a greatness deeply rooted, as he again and again reminded the Indian people, in their ancient and incomparably rich religious heritage. Through many lectures and innumerable informal talks he had outlined his program for the revival of a strong, spiritually oriented India, vigorous on all levels of thought and activity. Over and over, in a cascade of words, he had exhorted the Hindu people to live by and for the great ideals that had sprung from the very soul of the country itself, and to make them real. "By stimulating [the Hindu people] I want to bring life into them," he had said; "to this I have dedicated my life. I will rouse them through the infallible power of Vedic Mantras. I am born to proclaim to them that fearless message—'Arise! Awake!'"¹ He wanted to convert India's deep-rooted and highly honored institution of sannyasa, or monasticism, into an organized force that would, through service, regenerate the country materially, intellectually, culturally, and, above all, spiritually. To this end, he had organized the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, setting in motion the "machine" that was to carry his work forward and from which his Master's teaching would spread and, as he said, "penetrate the world to the very bone."² The institutions he started in India were small, but the power he poured into them, assuring their indestructibility and steady growth, was incalculable.

From time to time Swami Vivekananda had contemplated returning to the West. As early as April of 1897 he thought of making a visit to London, where the work he had so successfully

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

started had, in his absence, begun to fall apart. But his doctors prevented him from leaving India. "I may come over for a month or so very soon however," he wrote in May to a friend. "Only if I could see my work started here, how gladly and freely would I travel about."³ It was not until the following year that he once more thought seriously of leaving India. "I am going to America again with Mrs. [Ole] Bull in a few months [via Japan]," he wrote to one of his brother monks, Swami Ramakrishnananda, in February of 1898.⁴

But during that summer and early fall, the Swami traveled through northern India with, among others, three of his Western disciples—Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod from America and Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) from England. In Kashmir—that Himalayan land where India's spiritual culture and religious history is layers deep, he had such profound and sustained spiritual experiences that, returning to Calcutta, his mind remained far withdrawn. He found it difficult to attend even to the voices of those who spoke to him, let alone think of going to the West.

A brief unpublished description of the Swami during this period is contained in a journal kept by Swami Chidrupananda during a visit to India in 1934-35. Under the date January 11, 1935, Swami Chidrupananda (then Mr. Alfred T. Clifton) records a talk with Swami Shuddhananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda's, during the course of which Swami Shuddhananda recalled his Guru's almost impenetrable abstraction in the late autumn of 1898. "After his pilgrimage to the cave of Amarnath in Kashmir," he related, "one day he was questioning me about some simple personal matters of mine. I answered him, but he just said 'What?' as if he had not heard me at all. Five or six times I answered him, but he gave no indication that he heard a word I said."⁵

Broken health was also a deterrent to Swamiji's proposed voyage to the West, and thus although hope returned for a time that he might undertake the trip, he had perforce to write to Mrs. Bull on December 29 from Vaidyanath, Deoghar, "You

know already my inability to accompany you. I cannot gather strength enough.”⁶ Until the eleventh hour his Western friends looked for a miracle. “As you say,” Charlotte Sevier wrote to Josephine MacLeod on New Year’s Day from Almora, “there is time for Swamiji to change his mind yet, and I should not be the slightest surprised, if he turned up at the last moment on the ship to join you!”⁷ But Swamiji did not, could not, leave Vaidyanath, and Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod sailed off to England without him. Still, there would be other ships, and his letter of December 29 had closed on an optimistic note: “Hoping soon to join you in Europe or America,” he had written.

Swamiji’s friends did not let him forget this hope and promise. On the strength of it Miss MacLeod sent money for his passage to Swami Saradananda, one of his brother monks, who, together with Swami Brahmananda, was in charge of the Math’s financial affairs. “I have advised Swamiji to come to the West *at once*,” she wrote to Mrs. Bull, and went on to give the gist of her advice: “There was no means to carry out his Indian schemes just now—& sent the ticket money—& I hope he would bring Turiyananda [a brother monk].”⁸ Swami Saradananda replied to Miss MacLeod on March 18: “You have been so kind about the passage money of the Prophet. He has not come to me yet for it & I have deposited it in my bank account. I will give it to him whenever he is really in need of it.”⁹ (“The Prophet” was one of the names Swamiji’s Western disciples in India called him among themselves.)

In the meanwhile Sister Nivedita had also attempted, with some success, to persuade Swamiji that a sea voyage would be just the thing for his health. “I urged Swami to leave in April,” she wrote in a long unpublished letter, dated March 5 to 8, to Miss MacLeod, whom she addressed by the pet name Yum, short for Yum-Yum—no doubt after the chief of the three little maids in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado*, the three little maids in this case being, of course, Miss MacLeod, Mrs. Bull, and Nivedita, between whom, during their Indian

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

travels with Swamiji, a deep, unbreakable bond had grown. (It is also said that the name Yum belonged to a Tibetan goddess of energy and seemed particularly suited, therefore, to Miss MacLeod.)¹⁰ Nivedita went on to recount her conversation with Swamiji:

... Won't Sad [Swami Sadananda, a disciple of Swamiji's] go with him to Port Said & Mr. St. [Edward T. Sturdy, an English disciple who had been in charge of the Vedanta work in London] meet him there? He dreaded being ill at sea so much. He said no... but if he cd take Turian [Swami Turiyananda] it wd be a solid gain—for he cd leave him behind to work—somewhere. Only difficulty? Money. So I suggested that I shd write to Mr. Sturdy and suggest his [Swami Turiyananda's] passage being paid out of the £80 in the Westminster Bank [funds allotted to Swamiji's work]. He was greatly pleased but said it must be on my own responsibility. So if telegrams from America are not too expensive—will you back up this appeal? I do want him to go West. I know he wd be well—& he wants to go. He told me in the boat [a houseboat on the Ganga, where, for the sake of his health, Swamiji spent part of the day] how he loved to go into the middle of the river when “everything was sizzling”—when the waves seemed to throb with heat & so on. It was such a wonderful picture of Maya.¹¹

But it was Swamiji's great brother monk Swami Brahmananda whose voice counted most. “When Swami Vivekananda went to America for the second time, he had no great inclination for that,” Swami Turiyananda recalled many years later. “But Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] said, ‘There is a necessity for going.’”¹² One necessity, of course, was that Swamiji was much in need of a long rest far from the scene of his intense labors and worries of the past two and a half years. Perhaps Swami Brahmananda saw other necessities as well, for others

there were, both immediate and long-range, both obvious and as yet unrevealed. Gently he persuaded him, and by the beginning of May Swamiji had decided to sail.

"The Swamiji is better and still here," Swami Saradananda wrote on May 11 to Mrs. Bull, whom he had known well in America and whom he addressed affectionately as Granny, "but intends to sail by the end of May, if berths could be secured in the P. O. SS. which sails by the 30th inst. Margo [Sister Nivedita] is looking after it."¹³

But an outbreak of plague in Calcutta was causing Margo difficulties. "The Messageries [a French line] and the P. & O. [Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Line] are not taking any native passengers because they are such a plague," Swami Saradananda wrote a week later to Miss MacLeod (whom he, too, called Yum-Yum) and went on to explain the European point of view. "I mean they [the natives] are the personification of the disease, or plague walking on legs!"¹⁴ The best Sister Nivedita could do under the circumstances was to secure berths on the *Golconda*, a passenger ship of the less finical British India Steam Navigation Company. The *Golconda* would not sail until June 20; but at least Swamiji's passage to the West was booked.

"A big piece of news," Swami Saradananda wrote in his letter of May 18 to Miss MacLeod, "—but you have heard it perhaps from Nivedita long before. I am so slow! She keeps nothing for me to say! The Prophet's passage has been engaged. Turiyananda accompanies him. They sail the 20th June per SS. *Golconda* of the B.I.S.N."

Swami Turiyananda, who was to accompany Swamiji to the Western world, was one of Sri Ramakrishna's great disciples and a monk of austerity and meditation, averse by temperament to a life of outer activity and public preaching. Yet he had pledged himself to undertake whatever task Swamiji might ask of him. As is told in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples (hereafter also referred to as the *Life*), it had been in Darjeeling in 1897 that after

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

urging Swami Turiyananda to no avail to preach in northern India, Swamiji finally "put his arms round his Gurubhai's neck and laying his head against his breast, wept like a child, saying, 'Dear Haribhai, can't you see me laying down my life, inch by inch, in fulfilling this mission of my Master, till I have come to the verge of death! Can you look on without helping by relieving me of a part of my great burden?'"¹⁵ No one could resist such a plea from Swamiji, least of all one of his brother monks. Never again could Swami Turiyananda say no to his beloved brother—neither in the matter of going to the West nor, while there, in the difficult and, as it turned out, almost killing task that Swamiji was to assign him.

Sister Nivedita was also to sail on the *Golconda*. "Swami talks of taking me to America and setting me to lecture under a bureau, and so *earn* the money we shall need," she wrote to "Yum" on June 7. "How glad I should be!"¹⁶ Formerly Miss Margaret Noble, Nivedita was an intellectual young woman of Irish parentage, who, before she met Swami Vivekananda in London, had been engaged in running a school in accordance with the progressive methods of education then coming into vogue. She had also been actively, often impassioned, interested in a number of political and social problems of the day. An articulate champion of the oppressed, an ardent advocate of social reform, brilliant, talented, and intense, she would almost surely have made a name as Margaret Noble had not her meeting with the Swami in the autumn of 1895 changed the entire tenor of her life. At first she had been resistant to his teachings. Yet the memory of him could not be brushed aside, and when in 1896 he had again come to London, she had once again gone to hear him. Then she had gone again and yet again, until, as she was to write years later, "the time came, before the Swami left England, when I addressed him as 'Master.'"¹⁷ During 1897 she contemplated, with increasing fervor, the prospect of dedicating her life to the service of the Swami and his Motherland, and in the early part of 1898 she voyaged, her mind made up, to India. She was then thirty

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

years old. "Her portrait, at the period of her sailing," her friend Eric Hammond, who was also an ardent admirer of Swami Vivekananda, was to write, "shows us a young but distinctive woman with luminous grey-blue eyes, with hair of light golden brown, with a complexion radiant in its clearness, with a smile ingratiating and alluring. Of medium height; alert in every muscle and movement, eager, enterprising, dauntless."¹⁸

Giving Margaret Noble the first monastic vows—the vows of brahmacharya—shortly after her arrival in Calcutta, the Swami bestowed upon her the name Nivedita—"the dedicated." "I am now convinced," he had earlier written in response to her persistent offer to serve, "that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially."¹⁹

To Swami Ramakrishnananda he wrote in March of 1898, "Miss Noble is really an acquisition. She will soon surpass Mrs. Besant as a speaker, I am sure."²⁰ He was referring to Annie Besant, the gifted leader of the Theosophists.

But Nivedita's training, which took place largely during the tour of northern India and Kashmir, had not been easy. Idealistic and eager to serve India though she was, she was still fervently opinionated and unpliant, her ideas cemented together by prejudices so inbred as to be unknown to herself. Patiently, though not always gently, for the time was short, the Swami unearthed, unmasked, demolished all that stood in the path of her potential greatness and usefulness. It was a painful process. "My relation to our Master at this time can only be described as one of clash and conflict,"²¹ she later wrote in *The Master as I Saw Him*. But in the end peace was restored and a tangible blessing bestowed. Returning to Calcutta in the fall of 1898, she set about the task the Swami had assigned her—the establishment of a day school for Hindu girls. For the purpose, she rented a house in the Baghbazar area of Calcutta, and there, living under the Swami's direction

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

the exceedingly austere and secluded life of a Hindu nun, she taught the few girls who came to her. It was a small beginning, but the work of educating the girls of India, of molding great women—capable, strong, independent, and imbued with the basic spiritual ideals of the Motherland—was to the Swami's mind one of the extremely important aspects of his mission. "By all the means in our power the Nivedita Girls' School in Calcutta should be put on a firm footing,"²² he had written from Kashmir to Swami Brahmananda. Indeed it was to establish the school that he had so painstakingly trained Nivedita, spending more effort on her, as he once told Miss MacLeod, than he had spent on any other.

She plunged into the work with all the passionate intensity of her nature, determined to surmount the many obstacles that blocked her way, not the least of which was a lack of money. On February 7, 1899, she wrote to "Yum-Yum":

He [Swamiji] had a private talk with me about which I want to tell you. He told me that I must return to England. There was no hope of any money here, and my work would be wasted unless I could now proceed to take in ten or twenty girls as boarders. If I did this at all, I must have vested security, so that if I died or changed, etc., the girls might not be thrown back on their families' hands. There must be permanent security. As far as girls went, he could give me one hundred any day from amongst his own disciples. It was now only a question of when I should go.

Swamiji's advice had not struck Nivedita as being sound. It had seemed to her, rather, an unjustified admission of defeat. "I told him," she continued to Miss MacLeod,

that if he wished, of course I would go, but I asked if I had failed in any way. He said, "No, you have done very well." Then I said "May I use what money remains?"

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

"But there is none," he said; "Why, I have six hundred and twenty rupees [\$207] untouched," I said. "And I think we are strong enough to work and fail if need be. Your idea of leaving in power is mere show after all. We need not think of show." And then I went on, "This anxiety has had the good effect of making you consult me about a plan, but it doesn't seem terrible in itself to me. Don't think further about providing for me, let me go on till September, on what I have, and work as if there were no chance of my going home. Then let us face the situation again." To fly at the first difficulty [she added to "Yum"], unless I am called home, and that is made clearly my duty, would be absurd.²³

Swamiji allowed his disciple to learn for herself. A month later she was still determined to hang on. "Swami has had another serious talk with me," she wrote to Miss MacLeod on March 8,

...he came to the conclusion that Rama Bai's work was the right thing [insofar as she had established boarding rather than day schools] & that if we cd only find money we'd have a house for the school—& widows' home, & the Holy Mother & her Court in it as head—chaperonage wd be beyond question. "Mais l'argent, mon amie!" "Oh never mind Swami," I said, "I'm beginning to think Yum's plan of Paris will really happen next year, & if it does, I believe it will prove to be my chance to get the work on a big footing. For this year I'll just hold on!"²⁴

Many more weeks passed before Nivedita finally acknowledged that Swamiji knew whereof he spoke.

Only yesterday morning [she wrote on May 21 in one of her many letters to Miss MacLeod] I gave in and told

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

Swami that I knew my school was a waste of time. He was sympathetic, and told me he would give me some important work pending the time when I could go to Europe and bring back money for my "Home for Widows and Girls."²⁵

Thus it happened that when Swamiji left India the second time, Sister Nivedita went with him to seek help for her work in the Western world.

Once the decision to sail had been made, Swamiji was anxious to get to the West, as Swami Saradananda wrote to Mrs. Bull at the beginning of May. Yet to leave his brother monks for a long period of time was not a casual matter: his health being what it was, he was no doubt mindful of the possibility that he might never return, and there was still much to impart to those in India who were to carry on his work. For some five or six weeks before his sailing he again and again gathered his beloved brothers and his disciples around him. "It is very hard to do anything while the Swami is here," Swami Saradananda wrote on May 11 to Mrs. Bull, "for he wants us all by his side so often, now that he has settled to sail. But he repays us all more than enough with his love & talks and we will all feel the void when he is gone."²⁶

One of Swamiji's question classes of this period, which has been recorded in the Belur Math Diary, contains a theme that was to resound insistently throughout his coming visit to the West. The class was held on the evening of May 9, 1899, and Swamiji said in part:

The end should never be lost sight of. For all my respect for the Rishis of yore, I cannot but denounce in the strongest terms their method which they always followed in instructing the people. They always enjoined them to do certain things, but they never took care to explain to them the reason why they should do so. This method was

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

pernicious to the very core and instead of enabling men to attain the end, it laid upon their shoulders a mass of meaningless nonsense. They said they kept the end hidden from the view of the people only because they could not understand its real meaning, because they were not worthy recipients of such high instructions. This *adhikarivada*, as they call it, is the result of pure selfishness. . . . Those who were so eager to support the *adhikarivada* ignored the tremendous fact of the infinite possibilities of the human soul. Every man is capable of receiving knowledge if it is imparted in his own language. . . . You must speak out the truth without any fear that it will perturb the weak. Truth is always truth. Speak it out boldly. Men are selfish, they do not want others to come up to the same level of their knowledge. But they explain it by saying that knowledge of the highest spiritual truths will bring about confusion in weak-minded men. I cannot believe in the self-contradictory statement that light brings greater darkness. It is like the chance of losing life by being drowned in the deep of *satchidananda*. You call it the ocean of absolute existence and at the same time think that you would cease to exist. How absurd is that!

. . . Men also desist from speaking out broad truths from fear of losing the respect of people. They always try to make a compromise between real eternal truths and the nonsensical prejudices of the people. The result is that the grand truths are soon buried under heaps of rubbish and the latter is eagerly held as real truths. . . . Know ye for certain that this attempt at compromise proceeds from arrant downright cowardice, and *adhikarivada* is a sure result of the most abominable sort of selfishness. Therefore repeatedly I say to you, be bold to speak out your convictions. Never hesitate to do so from fear of losing your respect or causing unhappy friction. . . .²⁷

The full truth, the highest truth for all—this was to be

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

the keynote of the last great season of Swamiji's mission to the world.

The time for farewells soon came. On the afternoon of June 17, three days before the date of sailing, Swamiji, accompanied by many members of the Belur Math and by his women relatives as well, went to the chapel on the Math grounds where the relics of Sri Ramakrishna were enshrined and worshiped. He had gone there to sing to his Master and take leave of him. Sister Nivedita, who might have written of that vibrating afternoon to Miss MacLeod, was not present, an address "on the behalf of the younger members of the Math" being given to her in another building.²⁸ Thus one learns of Swamiji's farewell to his Master only through the Math Diary, in which one finds the following brief entry for June 17:

...All others went to Thakur-Ghar [chapel] to hear Swamiji's song, who sang many songs about Siva, Kali, etc. The women relations of Swamiji were also present. Swamiji was much excited.²⁹

The words "much excited" in relation to Swami Vivekananda say a great deal. He was surely in a state of divine ecstasy; for only a huge wave of spiritual emotion could create in him signs of fervor visible to others. "People do not notice the plunge of an elephant in a big lake, Sri Ramakrishna used to say of the immense spiritual capacity of this beloved disciple."³⁰ Lost in ecstasy, Swamiji evidently sang for hours that afternoon, communing with his Master, knowing he heard. "When you sing," Sri Ramakrishna had once said to him, "He who dwells here [touching his heart], like a snake, hisses as it were, and then, spreading His hood, quietly holds Himself steady and listens to your music."³¹

About dusk [the Math Diary goes on to recount] Swamiji with the relations went to Baghbazar, via Simla by a carriage; eleven of us went by a boat to Baghbazar to join

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

a dinner party given in honour of Swamiji's departure by Babu M. N. Gupta. . . . Swamiji was invited by [Maharajah Sir] Jatindra Mohan Tagore to his house, [the latter having been] pleased by reading his *Raja Yoga*.³²

In the late afternoon of June 19, the day before the sailing, all the members of the Belur Math (except Swami Brahmananda and a young brahmacharin) gathered at the monastery and a photographer was called in. "A photo of Swamiji and [one] of S. Turiyananda were taken,"³³ the Math Diary relates. Two group photographs were also taken, one of which has been reproduced in *Vivekananda, A Biography in Pictures*.³⁴ That night, the Diary continues,

a meeting was held to offer parting address to Swamiji in which all were present. The meeting was opened by Swami Saradananda. Then an address was given to Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda by the junior members of the Math. Swami Akhandananda, Swami Trigunatita, Haramohan Babu and the Marhatti Brahmin spoke a few words. Swami Turiyananda gave a short reply. Then Swamiji rose and spoke with earnestness and eloquence.³⁵

Swamiji's talk to the assembled swamis and novices has been published in volume three of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (hereafter referred to as the *Complete Works*) under the title "Sannyasa: Its Ideal and Practice." Nevertheless, I shall quote here a short passage, as it appears in the Math Diary, for therein he sounded another theme which was to be heard again and again throughout his second visit to the West:

...In our country [he said], the old idea is to sit in a cave and meditate and die. To go ahead of others in salvation is wrong. One must learn sooner or later that

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

one cannot get salvation if he does not try to seek the salvation of his brother. You must try to combine immense idealism and immense practicality in you. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields. . . .

The next thing to remember is that the aim of this institution is to make men. You must not merely learn what some rishi says. Those rishis are gone. Their opinions are also gone with them. You must be rishis yourselves. You are also as much a man as the greatest of men—even an Incarnation. You must stand on your own feet. What can mere book learning do? What can meditation do even? What can the mantras and tantras do? You must have this new method—the method of man-making.³⁶

“Red blood began to flow through their veins as people listened to his words,” a Mr. Sachindranath Basu, who was present, later wrote to a disciple of Swamiji’s in Benares. “On hearing him, everyone felt himself to be a *man*. Swamiji said with great enthusiasm, ‘My sons, all of you be men. This is what I want! If you are even a little successful, I shall feel my life has been meaningful.’ ”³⁷

“Men should be taught to be practical, physically strong,” Swamiji had said six weeks or so earlier during an evening talk with Swami Saradananda about the policy of work to be followed in India. “A dozen such lions will conquer the world, not millions of sheep. Men should not be taught to imitate a personal ideal, however great.”³⁸

“Man-making”! This, as we shall see, Swamiji was to speak of as his “new gospel,” applying it not only to samnyasins, not only to Indians, but, in its most profound sense, to men and women everywhere and in all walks of life. Indeed, to make men and to teach the highest truth constituted in Swamiji’s language one and the same mission—and this mission, to his mind, formed the central task of his life on earth.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

The following day, June 20, the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, gave a sumptuous feast at her house in Calcutta for her departing sons—Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda. All the sannyasins of the Math were invited. As is well known, Holy Mother was the wife of Sri Ramakrishna and is today looked upon as one of India's greatest saints; more, she is considered by millions to be an incarnation of the Divine Mother—God in the aspect of Mother. Her sanction and blessings had been on Swamiji's first visit to the West; her blessings were now on this second trip as well. No send-off could have been more propitious than this feast the Holy Mother gave for her beloved sons.

That afternoon about three o'clock it was time to leave for Prinsep's Ghat on the Ganga. Although the ship would not weigh anchor until after five, it was necessary to be early, for the passengers would be made to undergo a strict examination at the dock for plague before being permitted to embark. There had been talk of getting a carriage for Swamiji, the same Mr. Basu who is quoted above related, but as no decision had been reached, Mr. Basu himself fetched a brougham and a pair of Arab horses from the house of a friend. In this conveyance Swamiji and his party drove off. He had changed from his sannyasin robes to a coat of Assam silk, trousers, and "a pair of cabin shoes, priced about ten or twelve rupees. And he had on a night cap," Mr. Basu wrote (perhaps the small round hat he later wore in the West). ". . . But to tell you the truth," he added, "he was not looking well."³⁹

All the members of the Monastery, the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, many relatives and friends—a crowd of some fifty strong—followed Swamiji to the dock. "There was such a crowd of yellow and other robed ones to see us off!"⁴⁰ Nivedita later exclaimed in a letter to Miss MacLeod. Bouquets and garlands were showered on the two sannyasins, and some of these, overflowing, Swamiji gave to his English disciple.

About five o'clock a launch arrived from the *Golconda*, which was anchored in midstream some distance away. "Swamiji,

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

the delight of our eyes, got on the launch and took leave of everybody," Mr. Basu recounted. "Swami Turiyananda looked very serious."

...When the launch was about to leave [he continued] all eyes became tearful, some eyes were flooded with tears. Then fifty people bowed with one accord to Swamiji, touching the ground with their foreheads. It was a very moving sight on the bank of the Ganga. The English people looked on with astonishment.... Then the launch left for the ship. As long as Swamiji could be seen, everybody waved their handkerchiefs.... All faces were sad, as though they had immersed the image of the Divine Mother on the tenth [and last] day of Her worship.⁴¹

2

The *Golconda* moved slowly toward the sea. "Only in the high tide and during the day, the pilot can very carefully steer his ship, and in no other condition; consequently it took us two days to get out of the Hooghly [a delta branch of the Ganga],"¹ Swamiji wrote in his book *Parivrajak*, "the traveler" (translated in volume seven of the *Complete Works* as "Memoirs of European Travel"). The *Memoirs* (as I shall refer to them) are, actually, a long, running travel-letter meant for serial publication in the *Udbodhan*, the young Bengali-language magazine of the Ramakrishna Order. Writing the letters to help the magazine along, Swamiji couched them in "a light humorous tone in Bengali," which, the editor of the translation tells us, "is impossible to render in English." Much of the startling originality of Swamiji's style is also lost on us today, for he wrote these *Udbodhan* letters in colloquial Bengali—then an almost unheard of departure from the classical Sanskrit style that had characterized Bengali literature. The intelligentsia of Bengal had been scandalized. "When these articles began to be published in [the *Udbodhan*],...the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

orthodox literati were critical of his style of composition," Swamiji's brother Bhupendranath Datta wrote many years later in his book *Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet*.

They were purists of the old Sanskrit school [he continued]. They could not tolerate the expressions used by Swamiji in his Bengalee writings.... This school used to ridicule that *Udbodhan* is *Udbandhana* i.e. death by hanging. That means it hangs the language!... From the conservative *literati* came sneer and patronizing tone regarding the style of writing and the knowledge of Bengalee language of Swami Vivekananda. From the highbrow educated class which posed itself as the custodian of literary propriety came not a word of appreciation.²

One of the first men to acknowledge Swamiji as a master of Bengali prose was the poet Rabindranath Tagore, whose early works had also suffered the scorn of literary Bengal. "Go at once and read this book of Vivekananda," he was to tell an eminent fellow writer in connection with *Prachya O Paschatya* ("The East and the West"), which Swamiji had also written in Bengali for the *Udbodhan*. "How colloquial Bengalee can appear as a living and forceful language... you will realize after reading it."³ Thereupon he praised the book unstintingly.

Today, among the most well known of Swamiji's Bengali prose passages—many of which are studied in Indian schools and colleges as examples of a great literary style—is a selection from the *Memoirs* in which he describes the river banks as they appeared to him from the *Golconda* as the ship crept a hundred miles or so amid treacherous sand drifts to the Bay of Bengal. It was a scene he had first thrilled to on his return from the West in 1897:†

One cannot appreciate the beauty of the banks of our Ganges, unless one is returning from foreign countries

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

and entering the river by its mouth at Diamond Harbour [the translation reads]. That blue, blue sky, containing in its bosom black clouds, with golden-fringed whitish clouds below them, underneath which clumps of cocoanut and date palms toss their tufted heads like a thousand chowries, and below them again is an assemblage of light, deep, yellowish, slightly dark and other varieties of green massed together—these being the mango, lichi, black-berry, and jack-fruit trees, with an exuberance of leaves and foliage that entirely hide the trunk, branches, and twigs—while, close by, clusters of bamboos toss in the wind, and at the foot of all lies that grass, before whose soft and glossy surface the carpets of Yarkand, Persia, and Turkistan are almost as nothing—as far as the eye can reach that green, green grass looking as even as if some one had trimmed and pruned it, and stretching right down to the edge of the river—as far down the banks as where the gentle waves of the Ganges have submerged and are pushing playfully against, the land is framed with green grass, and just below this is the sacred water of the Ganges. And if you sweep your eye from the horizon right up to the zenith, you will notice within a single line such a play of diverse colours, such manifold shades of the same colour, as you have witnessed nowhere else. I say, have you ever come under the fascination of colours—the sort of fascination which impels the moths to die in the flame, and the bees to starve themselves to death in the prison of flowers? I tell you one thing—if you want to enjoy the beauty of Gangetic scenery, enjoy it to your heart's content now, for very soon the whole aspect will be altered.... You will find instead the enveloping smoke of coal, and standing ghostlike in the midst of that smoke, the half-distinct chimneys of the factories!⁴

Neither factory nor smog marred Swamiji's and Nivedita's view as they sat on deck, watching the banks of the Ganga

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

phenomenon called the "Ganges Cone" was not guessed at; only recently did a six-year survey (1959-1965) of the bottom of the Indian Ocean reveal that the enormous quantities of mud and silt that the Ganga brings, day after day, century after century, from the Himalayas, Uttar Pradesh, and the Gangetic plain down to the Bay of Bengal pile up on the edge of the continental shelf and periodically avalanche with incredible force and speed down that sheer precipice onto the ocean floor far below. Powerful submarine currents of mud and silt-laden water then hurtle southward and fan out—primarily westward, as though drawn back toward the Motherland—to create over the millennia a vast, smooth plain of deep soil, which extends from India to Burma and the Andaman Islands and slopes hundreds of miles south, far beyond Ceylon. Thus one can say that the waters of the Bay of Bengal are indeed holy waters, not only because the Ganga has mingled with them, but because their basin is richly covered with Ganga silt, as holy to the Hindus as is the Ganga itself. As one can see from a painting made on the basis of the ocean survey and reproduced in the October 1957 issue of the *National Geographic* magazine, the whole eastern coast of India and the shores of Ceylon are washed with that water and thereby sanctified. Mother Ganga's embrace was wide indeed; and Swamiji would not, in fact, leave her ambience until the *Golconda* headed west for the Arabian Sea, a departure that would not take place for many days.

The ship reached Madras during the night of June 24 and anchored in the still waters of the harbor. For the past few days the people of Madras had been in a state of emotional turmoil. First, they had received telegraphed news of Swami Vivekananda's coming and, filled with joy, had prepared to give him a hero's welcome, even as they had done in 1897 on his return from the West. Next, they had learned that no Indian passenger of the *Golconda* was to be allowed to disembark, and their mood had swung from excited, festive anticipation to keen disappointment. "A public meeting was

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

held at Castle Kernan," an article in the Madras *Hindu* related, "at which it was resolved to address [the] Government, praying that the Swami Vivekananda be permitted to land at Madras and stop there for a few hours before embarking again."¹⁰

On the morning of Sunday, June 25, "two European Police Inspectors, a Madrasi Jamadar and a dozen Constables boarded our ship," Swamiji wrote in his *Memoirs*, "and told me that 'natives' were not allowed to land on the shore, but the Europeans were. A 'native,' whoever he might be, was of such dirty habits that there was every chance of his carrying plague germs about; but the Madrasis had asked for a special permit for me, which they might obtain."¹¹

No such permit was forthcoming. "Message after message was dispatched to the Blue Heights," the *Hindu* report read, "but the Swami's friends and admirers got only some vague replies, but no sanction was wired to the Port Health Officer and the result was that the Health Officer could not allow him to land." Nor was anyone allowed to visit the ship, lest he be infected by a "native"—a term laden with pejorative overtones. The ship's captain and the European passengers, exempt somehow from plague, were allowed to go and come as they pleased.

Swamiji strode the deck like a captive lion. "I found him fretfully pacing up and down...and muttering to himself," Swami Turiyananda recounted many years later. "'Why do they not arrest me? Why do they not take my life?' At this I asked, 'Why? What will be the result if you are arrested or killed?' Swamiji said, 'Don't you see that the whole country is looking to me? If they do anything against me, it will rise up like a rocket.'"¹² Swamiji may have been right in so judging the underlying temper of his Motherland, but as it was, the Madras people, though deprived of his *darshan* by a discriminatory decree, were compliant and resigned.

From one point of view, the regulation that kept him aboard the *Golconda* was heaven-sent. "It was quite exciting at Madras,"

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod. "Crowds of people and an appeal to the Governor to let Swamiji land. But Plague considerations prevailed, and we were kept on board, to my great relief, for the sea-voyage is doing him a world of good, and one day of crowds and lectures would be enough to cause him utter exhaustion."¹³

From this standpoint of Swamiji's health, things were bad enough as they were. All day long crowds of boats put out from shore to cluster round the ship. Hundreds of his disciples and friends called up to him as he stood on deck, offered him presents of all sorts, delivered long addresses. In his own words:

... I found all my friends—Alasinga, Biligiri, Narasimhachary, Dr. Nanjunda Rao, Kidi [Singaravelu Mudaliar], and others on the boats. Basketfuls of mangoes, plantains, cocoanuts, cooked rice-and-curd, and heaps of sweet and salt delicacies, etc., began to come in. Gradually the crowd thickened—men, women, and children, and boats everywhere. I found also Mr. Chamier, my English friend who had come out to Madras as a barrister-at-law. Ramakrishnananda and Nirbhayananda made some trips near to the ship. [Swami Ramakrishnananda was one of the great monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna; at Swamiji's request he had gone from Belur to Madras in March of 1897 and had there started a monastery and teaching center. Swami Nirbhayananda was a disciple of Swamiji's who had taken his sannyasa vows at the Belur Math in the early part of 1897.] They insisted on staying on the boat the whole day in the hot sun, and I had to remonstrate with them, when they gave up the idea. And as the news of my not being permitted to land got abroad, the crowd of boats began to increase still more. I, too, began to feel exhaustion from leaning against the railings too long. Then I bade farewell to my Madras friends and entered my cabin. Alasinga got no opportunity to consult me about the *Brahmavadin* and the Madras

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

work; so he was going to accompany me to Colombo. The ship left the harbour in the evening, when I heard a great shout, and peeping through the cabin-window I found that about a thousand Madrasi men, women, and children who had been sitting on the harbour-walls, gave this farewell shout when the ship started. On a joyous occasion the Madrasis, also, like the Bengalis, make the peculiar sound with the tongue known as the *hulu*.¹⁴

According to Swamiji's *Memoirs*, the S.S. *Golconda* took four days to sail from Madras to Colombo, going the far way around Ceylon. Yet according to the calendar of events as we know it, the trip took three nights and two days—long enough even so. The seas were wild: "That rising and heaving of waves which had commenced from the mouth of the Ganges began to increase as we advanced, and after we had left Madras it increased still more," Swamiji wrote.

The ship began to roll heavily [he continued], and the passengers felt terribly sea-sick. . . . When the prow of the ship settled into the hollow of a wave and the stern was pitched up, the screw rose clear out of the water and continued to wheel in the air, giving a tremendous jolting to the whole vessel. And the second class [where two frightened Hindu boys had a dark and ailess cabin] then shook as when a rat is seized by a cat and shaken.¹⁵

Swamiji apparently did not suffer from seasickness; nor did his Madrasi disciple Alasinga Perumal, who had hurriedly bought a ticket to Colombo and boarded the ship. The latter was indeed notably unconcerned by the rolling, bucking, and shimmying of the *Golconda*. "A Madrasi by birth," Swamiji wrote of him, "with his head shaven so as to leave a tuft in the centre, barefooted, and wearing the *dhoti*, [his forehead over-spread with the caste-mark of the Tengale sect], he got into the first class; he was strolling now and then on the deck and

when hungry, was chewing some of the popped rice and peas!"—which, for the sake of caste purity, he had brought with him in two small bundles.¹⁶

Swamiji was very fond of this disciple, whom he had known before his first visit to the West and who at his urging and direction had started the English-language *Brahmavadin* in September of 1895. At first a fortnightly, the magazine was to become a monthly in November of 1899—a change that Alasinga perhaps wanted to discuss, among other things, with Swamiji. "One rarely finds men like our Alasinga in this world," Swamiji wrote in his *Memoirs*, "—one so unselfish, so hard-working and devoted to his Guru, and such an obedient disciple is indeed very rare on earth."¹⁷

On the voyage to Ceylon, Swamiji spoke to Nivedita of the extreme scarcity of such unswerving love. "The love on which he could most surely count if he became a drunkard tomorrow," she wrote to Miss Macleod, recalling his words, "was not that of his disciples, they would kick him out in horror, but that of a few (not all) of his Gurubhais. To them he would be still the same. 'And mind this, Margot,' he said, 'it is when half-a-dozen people learn to love like this that a new religion begins. Not till then.... Give me half-a-dozen disciples like that, and I will conquer the world.'"¹⁸

The voyage to Colombo was for the most part a scenic one. "We have been coasting the east of Ceylon," Nivedita wrote to "Yum-Yum," "and have been watching a whale play. Before breakfast I could smell the spring breezes, though only Swami would acknowledge that I was not deceived."¹⁹ In an article written perhaps on board ship, but not published, as far as I know, until July, 1927, when it appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata* under the apt title "At the Feet of the Motherland," Sister Nivedita described the changing view of Ceylon's coast, which cast upon the gazer the spell of that ancient and holy epic, the *Ramayana*.

We are rounding Cape Dondra [she wrote]. All day

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

long we have been coasting the eastern side of Ceylon,—a land lovely with palm-forest and pasture, with rose lit cliff and curving broken rock.

It is the Hour of Peace. Every day at this time, as sunlight dies, the sea begins to utter itself in a new tone. A kind of sorrowful sighing mingles with the sound of waves, and every night and all night long, goes this low moaning of the waters. But to-night it is as if the soft voice spoke to itself a name,—the name of Sita; and again, as a higher surge than common rises, and beats against the ship, “Jay Sita-Ram! Sita-Ram! Jay! Jay! Jay!” one hears dying away in the distance.

That snow-white ring of surf against the shore has a significance all its own—here, where it girdles the prison of the most perfect wife the world has ever seen.

Brynhild, the warrior princess of the northern story could be come at only through the Circle of Flame—but Sita—type and crown of Indian womanhood—has for her magic guard the “wine-dark sea,” and the fair sea-foam that breaks among the rocks....

To-morrow at seven we reach Colombo; only a few days more, and the beloved land will be a memory,—an ever-present and ever-beautiful memory truly, but no more an actuality. There is pain in all partings: in this, though it is only for a while, how much!²⁰

Before the parting came there was an afternoon and evening of festivities in Colombo, for here, too, the people knew and revered Swamiji. They had given him a triumphant reception in January of 1897 and were overjoyed at his return, brief though it was. Colombo was more fortunate than Madras, for a permit to land was granted him—though not without ado. “After a great delay and difficulty,” Sister Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod a week later, “we got off the boat about mid-day.” But once having disembarked, they “went from one hospitality to another.”²¹ In his *Memoirs*, Swamiji himself tells

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

a little of his day in Colombo and of the old friends he met once again:

Sir Coomara Swami is the foremost man among the Hindus: his wife is an English lady, and his son is bare-footed and wears the sacred ashes on his forehead. Mr. Arunachalam and other friends came to meet me. After a long time I partook of *madgutanni* and the king-cocoanut. They put some green cocoanuts into my cabin. I met Mrs. Higgins and visited her boarding school for Buddhist girls. I also visited the monastery and school of our old acquaintance, the Countess of Canovara. The Countess' house is more spacious and furnished than Mrs. Higgins'. The Countess has invested her own money, whereas Mrs. Higgins has collected the money by begging. The Countess herself wears a *gerua* cloth after the mode of the Bengali *sari*.²²

(The Countess Canovara, an American woman, had visited Calcutta a few months earlier. "She has started 15 schools [in Ceylon]," Nivedita, much impressed, had written at that time, "including one orphanage & one industrial school...of wh. one has 320 pupils. Government helps her with large grants. I felt wondrous respect for her on hearing this—for whatever the *quality* of the schools—to have any at all is a great step.")²³

In her letter of July 5 to Miss MacLeod, Nivedita wrote of the gala farewell reception given to Swamiji at the last house he visited on his way back to the *Golconda*:

Last of all, driving down to the quay, we had to enter a house where we were met outside by drums, fifes and tom-toms. Inside a dense crowd, and fruit on a table. Oh what a crowd! And how devotedly they looked at Swamiji! He pointed to his European clothes, but it made no difference. He was their Avatar just the same. Then he took

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

a small fruit, and sipped milk. . . and then, as he turned to go, you should have heard the shout. "Praise to Siva, the Lord of Parbutty! Hail", it was deafening, and you should have seen the crowd in the street when we got out, and the crowd on the landing-stage. Then came our first host and hostess to see us off with endless presents. The Hostess was an Englishwoman, and promised me that if I found the person and made the plans, I could come to them for help in starting a school in Ceylon for Hindu girls.²⁴

And now, at last, the *Golconda* steaming away from Colombo on that evening of Wednesday, June 28, began indeed the long voyage from "the Land of Renunciation to the Land of the Enjoyment of the World."

3

The *Golconda's* passage across the Arabian Sea seems to have been timed to meet the worst of the monsoon head on. As the ship proceeded west, the seas grew more and more wild.

Now we have to encounter full monsoon conditions [Swamiji wrote]. The more our ship is advancing, the more is the storm increasing and the louder is the wind howling—there is incessant rain, and enveloping darkness; huge waves are dashing on the ship's deck with a terrible noise, so that it is impossible to stay on the deck. The dining table has been divided into small squares by means of wood partitions, placed lengthwise and breadthwise, called fiddle, out of which the food articles are jumping up. The ship is creaking, as if it were going to break to pieces. The Captain says, "Well, this year's monsoon seems to be unusually rough." . . .

. . . Near the island of Socotra [a little over 450 miles east of Aden], the monsoon was at its worst. The Captain

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

remarked that this was the centre of the monsoon, and that if we could pass this, we should gradually reach calmer waters. And so we did. And this nightmare also ended.¹

It was a long nightmare: the little *Golconda* took ten days to flounder along, pitching and shuddering, from Colombo to Aden instead of the usual six, and the accommodations, under any conditions, were none too comfortable. At first Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda had been assigned one of the two cabins on the topmost, or hurricane, deck (the ship's doctor occupied the other), but soon because of the excessive heat from the engine room, which was straight below, they moved to a lower deck. As cabins went in those days, this second cabin was as much as one could reasonably ask for. "The passengers' cabins," Swamiji wrote,

are made of wood. And there are many holes along the top and bottom of the wooden walls of these, for the free passage of air. The walls are painted over with ivory-paint which has cost nearly £25 per room. There is a small carpet spread on the floor and against one of the walls are fixed two frameworks somewhat resembling iron bedsteads without legs, one on top of the other. Similarly on the opposite wall. Just opposite the entrance there is a wash-basin over which there is a looking-glass, two bottles, and two tumblers for drinking water.... Below the lower bedstead, there is room for storing the trunks and bags.²

In 1900 the *Golconda* was not a dazzlingly new steamship; on the other hand, built in 1887, it was not decrepit, nor was it, for those days, immoderately small. Its tonnage was 5,874 (the tonnage of the average-size passenger liner today is about 20,000; the first *Queen Elizabeth* was over 83,000). It was 422 feet long and 48 feet wide; it had one screw—the one that periodically rose out of the water and shook the ship like a cat

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

shaking a rat—four masts, two funnels, and a steel and iron hull. The first class could accommodate seventy-eight passengers, and the second class, twenty-four. There was no steerage, and although the ships of the British India Line took deck passengers, the *Golconda* had none on this particular voyage.

The first-class cabins, as Swamiji pointed out, were somewhat wider than those of the second class, but even so, they could not be described as roomy; there was not enough space between the bunks for a comfortable armchair; nor did the air holes afford much ventilation—particularly in monsoon weather, for, hot though it was, the portholes on the lower decks had to be kept shut. “One day Brother Turiyananda kept [the window] slightly ajar,” Swamiji recounted, “and a fragment of a wave entered and flooded the whole cabin!”³

Nor could one sit comfortably on the wildly rolling and often drenched deck. The only place to pass the time with moderate ease would have been the ship’s saloon, and there, no doubt, the two Swamis and Sister Nivedita spent many hours, reading and writing when possible, but mostly listening to the captain’s “cock and bull stories,” perhaps chatting with the other passengers, best of all talking among themselves.

Except for Swamiji, Swami Turiyananda, Swami Saradananda’s brother—Satishchandra Chakravarti, who had left Calcutta with the party—and the two seasick Bengali boys in the second class, whom the Swamis befriended and consoled, the *Golconda*’s passengers were either American or English. When the waves they ruled permitted, the latter paced the deck “with lordly steps, . . . dressed in charming attire, with a complexion like the moonbeams—looking like self-reliance and self-confidence personified, and appearing to the black races as pictures of pride and haughtiness.”⁴ There were two Christian missionaries on board, one of whom was an American—“a very good man named Bogesh.” Swamiji paints a graphic picture of this Mr. Bogesh and his family:

He has been married seven years, and his children number

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

half-a-dozen. The servants call it God's special grace—though the children perhaps, feel differently. Spreading a shabby bed on the deck, Mrs. Bogesh makes all the children lie on it and goes away. They make themselves dirty and roll on the deck, crying aloud. The passengers on the deck are always nervous, and cannot walk about...lest they might tread on any of Bogesh's children. Making the youngest baby lie in a square basket with high sides, Mr. and Mrs. Bogesh sit in a corner for four hours huddled together. One finds it hard to appreciate your European civilization....

...A little girl named Tootle [Swamiji continued] is accompanying her father; she has lost her mother. Our Nivedita has become a mother to Tootle and Bogesh's children....One sickly child of Bogesh suffers specially from want of care; the poor thing is rolling on the wooden deck the whole day. The old Captain now and then comes out of his cabin and feeds him with some soup with a spoon, and pointing to his slender legs says, "What a sickly child—how sadly neglected!"⁵

Swamiji records an exchange between himself and Mr. Bogesh during the *Golconda's* passage up the Red Sea, which is, I believe, worth repeating. The two men were probably walking on deck, when the missionary turned to Swamiji and informed him: "This is the Red Sea, which the Jewish leader Moses crossed on foot with his followers. And the army which the Egyptian King Pharaoh sent for their capture was drowned in the sea, the wheels of their war-chariots having stuck in the mud."

He further said [Swamiji relates] that this could now be proved by modern scientific reasons. Nowadays in every country it has become a fashion to support the miracles of religion by scientific argument. My friend [said Swamiji to the missionary], if these phenomena were the outcome

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

of natural forces, where then is there room for [the] intervention of your god "Yave"? A great dilemma!—If they are opposed to science, those miracles are mere myths, and your religion is false. And even if they are borne out by science, the glory of your god is superfluous, and they are just like any other natural phenomena. To this, Priest Bogesh replied, "I do not know all the issues involved in it, I simply believe."

Swamiji respected Mr. Bogesh's retreat to the bosom of faith. "This is all right," he wrote, "—one can tolerate that. But then there is a party of men who are very clear in criticising others' views and bringing forward arguments against them, but where they themselves are concerned, they simply say, 'I only believe, my mind testifies to their veracity.' These are simply unbearable. Pooh! What weight has their intellect? Absolutely nothing!"⁶

Rough though the passage was to Aden, Swamiji managed to write a portion, at least, of his *Memoirs* for the *Udbodhan*, later completing the first part (which closes with the arrival of the *Golconda* at London) during his short stay in England. The letters were lively, replete with detailed observations, full of interest and wit, and abounding in information. He wrote, among other things, of the history of shipbuilding from primitive canoes and rafts to modern warships and passenger steamers; of the religion of South India; of the history of Ceylon, of Aden, of Egypt, of the Suez Canal, of the ancient Mediterranean civilizations; he discussed the then modern methods of historical research and criticism; he described the scenes, the events, and conditions of the voyage in vivid detail, telling not only of the ship, the passengers, and the crew, but giving, for instance, a play-by-play account of the landing of a shark in the harbor of Suez. His incredibly vast fund of knowledge poured out from his fingertips, as it were, onto the page—not in a scholarly manner, for these letters were meant for popular reading, but with his genius for presenting the essence

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

of any matter in a few colorful and forceful words, which in this case (though he did not hesitate to roundly berate his countrymen now and then) glowed with humor and wit.

But the best part of the voyage—his own conversation—was recorded by Sister Nivedita. At first, she had entertained herself by “testing race questions.” As she wrote to Miss MacLeod on June 28, her object had been to break down the barriers the British passengers erected between themselves and Swamiji:

I am having great fun out of it all the time. . . . Swamiji was so much with me the first day or two that whenever a man spoke to me, I always tried to shunt the conversation on to him, making it evident that I sailed under his flag. Presently I found that every woman had made my acquaintance, in spite of my reserve, and of course that battle was won! At present a good many men are in the habit of coming up and talking to me, then if a “Native” comes to the other side, they suddenly disappear, during my effusive greeting. But even this is only some, others stay and talk to Swami before they go. . . . What’s the good of it all? I don’t know. I can’t set things all right all over India. Yet it certainly seems worth while if [thirty or forty young fellows] learn to sit at Swami’s feet and call for light. Yet race-prejudice is a great barrier.⁷

After a time Sister Nivedita quieted down, herself sitting at Swamiji’s feet with an absorbed and single mind. Thus in *The Master as I Saw Him* she could write:

To this voyage of six weeks I look back as the greatest occasion of my life. I missed no opportunity of the Swami’s society that presented itself, and accepted practically no other, filling up the time with quiet writing and needle-work; thus I received one long continuous impression of

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

his mind and personality, for which I can never be sufficiently thankful.

From the beginning of the voyage to the end, the flow of thought and story went on. One never knew what moment would see the flash of intuition, and hear the ringing utterance of some fresh truth.... Stories of the Shiva-Ratri, or Dark Night of Shiva, of Prithi Rai, of the judgment seat of Vikramaditya, of Buddha and Yasodhara, and a thousand more, were constantly coming up. And a noticeable point was, that one never heard the same thing twice. There was the perpetual study of caste; the constant examination and restatement of ideas; the talk of work, past, present, and future; and above all the vindication of Humanity, never abandoned, never weakened, always rising to new heights of defence of the undefended, of chivalry for the weak....

Now he would answer a question, with infinite patience, and again he would play with historic and literary speculations. Again and again his mind would return to the Buddhist period, as the *crux* of a real understanding of Indian history.⁸

Nivedita took notes, sometimes begging Swamiji to stop the stream of his thought, for she could contain no more without decanting what she had heard into a notebook.⁹ In *The Master as I Saw Him* her notes were to serve as the basis for four chapters (close to ten thousand words) in which she recorded the substance of those long, wonderful talks that went on day after day and that were, in part at least, a continuation of her training. Swamiji steeped her mind in his; he imbued her with a profound understanding of India—its past glories, the hope of its reawakening to a future more glorious still. He revealed to her the inmost significance of the Motherland's ideals, customs, and ways of thought; he initiated her more and more deeply into the realms of spirituality. She understood that much of what he told her was a trust to be passed on to

others. "Every now and then," she wrote, "he would return with consuming eagerness, to the great purpose of his life. And when he did this, I listened with an anxious mind, striving to treasure up each word that he let fall. For I knew that here I was but the transmitter, but the bridge, between him and that countless host of his own people, who would yet arise, and seek to make good his dreams."¹⁰

Swamiji's trust in Nivedita as a transmitter of his thought was not misplaced: he had early recognized her ability to grasp both the depth and subtlety of his ideas and to appreciate their immense importance to the world. He recognized as well her gifts as a writer and speaker. And indeed it is to her books that we owe much of our knowledge of Swamiji's life and thought during the months she spent in his company.

4

There was a side to Swamiji's mood during this period, however, that Nivedita did not record and that has been given scant attention by his biographers. Yet it was an important element in the drama of this second visit to the West. To judge solely from the information we have had of his voyage from Calcutta to England, it would appear that he was in a wholly cheerful and relaxed state of mind. He wrote entertainingly and humorously; he talked for hours on end with his traveling companions; he was amused, as he wrote, by the captain's tall yarns of adventure at sea; he exercised now and then with dumbbells; his health noticeably improved. "The rolling and pitching seem to do Swami good, strange to say," Sister Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod on July 5, two or three days before reaching Aden. "He has talked for hours at a time."¹ Yet there is evidence that on one level at least his mood was by no means serene or joyful. Nor is this surprising.

The last two years had been for him a period of physical and mental torture. It is true that during those years he had accomplished the major part of his mission to his people, but

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

they had not marked one long, smooth road to success. They had, rather, been years of struggle against enormous odds, years in which a sense of frustration had often torn at him, in which he had known many days of despondency, of despairing impatience, indeed of anguish. Again and again he was to refer to that period of his life as to some epochal storm through which he had passed.

"For the last year or so I have not been in my senses at all," he was to write to Swami Brahmananda from New York on November 21, 1899. "I do not know why. I had to pass through this hell—and I have."² From San Francisco he wrote to Mary Hale (an American friend) in March of 1900, "The last two years have been specially bad. I have been living in mental hell. It is partially lifted now, and I hope for better days, better states."³ And around the same time to Sister Nivedita, "I feel sometimes that freedom is near at hand and the tortures of the last two years have been great lessons in many ways. Disease and misfortune come to do us good in the long run, although at the time we feel that we are submerged for ever."⁴

One could, but need not, cite more references to the past terrible two years. They had been years during which he had worked with lightning speed and an expenditure of almost inconceivable energy on every level—physical, mental, spiritual. The inability of the Indian masses to respond and the resistance, indeed the opposition, of many sections of the upper classes to his ideas had been heartbreaking. It is true that on his return from his first visit to the West in the early part of 1897 he had been greeted everywhere with resounding ovations; triumphal arches had been erected, flowers had been strewn in his path, his carriage had been drawn by high dignitaries, glowing addresses of welcome had been presented to him. He had been worshiped everywhere as a god; and he had been deeply moved by his country's homage. But he had not been misled.

"I do not expect any help from India, in spite of all the jubilation over me," he had written to Sister Nivedita (then

Margaret Noble) in June of 1897. "They are so poor!"⁵ India's poverty had not been the only obstacle confronting him. Powerful groups had opposed him. Orthodox Brahmins in various parts of the country had frowned upon this young sannyasin who had crossed the ocean, who had taught the sacred Vedas to *mlechchhas*, and who had, it was rumored, eaten beef! Other groups had also stood against him, such as the Brahmo Samaj, an influential neo-Hindu religious and social-reform organization in Bengal; and Christian missionaries had not been idle, spreading, gossip of the worst kind. In short, as Swamiji wrote to an American disciple in February of 1897, "The country is full of persons, jealous and pitiless, who would leave no stone unturned to pull my work to pieces. But as you know well," he had added, "the more opposition, the more is the demon in me roused."⁶ He had indeed allowed nothing to stand in his way. Yet there can be little question that opposition and lack of money had braked his efforts at almost every turn, even as had the massive inertia of the Indian people as a whole. "One had to work so hard to do the least little thing,"⁷ he was to write later to an American friend, recalling these years that had drained away his strength.

Nor had it been a small, momentary disappointment to him that a number of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples, including some of his brother monks, had thought, mistakenly, that his ideas were not in accord with the teachings of his Master. Deeply devoted to him though his brothers were, some had not been convinced in their hearts that the new type of monasticism he was inaugurating should *be* inaugurated. As a consequence, there had been a lag in enthusiasm and will. Others, fired by his spirit, had wholeheartedly given their best to his cause from the start; but their number had been small. And even they, giants in spirituality though they were, had required training in the type of work that Swamiji was insisting upon. Organized humanitarian activity, with its account-keeping, its published reports, its solicitation of funds, its meetings, its paraphernalia, its backbreaking work, was totally alien to the

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

ancient tradition of Hindu monasticism. Rooted in profound meditation though this activity necessarily was (for therein lay its meaning and its strength), it was nonetheless revolutionary and path-blazing.

"Swamiji's new ideas seemed so different at first from what we had seen under Sri Ramakrishna," one of Swamiji's brother monks—Swami Premananda—many years later told a young college student (afterward Swami Ashokananda), "and what he asked us to do seemed so out of keeping with Sri Ramakrishna's ways that we began to doubt. We felt that Swamiji had learned all these things in the West and was trying to impose them upon us. But as time went on," he added, "and as I studied Swamiji's writings, I found that unless we understand Swamiji and act according to what he taught and wanted, we won't be able to understand Sri Ramakrishna at all!"

Although the love between Swamiji and his brothers had in large measure overridden the latter's doubts, the early, exceedingly critical period of pioneering had not been easy and smooth-flowing for anyone involved. His anger could be monumental, and he had not hesitated to berate those whom he loved most. "One day," Swami Turiyananda later recounted, "he was very much annoyed and said, 'I see I have to conduct the whole music single-handed—to sing and play the instrument and do everything myself, with none to help me!'"⁸

Yet beneath his impatience he had been immensely pleased by, and deeply appreciative of, the hard work of those who had caught his spirit and tried with might and main to carry out his ideas. There were, to mention a few, Swami Brahmananda, his beloved brother monk, who was second in command; Swami Saradananda, who had come back from America to fill the role of secretary-treasurer at Belur Math and who, together with Swami Turiyananda, had gone on a preaching tour through Kathiawar; Swami Ramakrishnananda, who was struggling to establish a center in Madras; Swami Trigunatita, who was producing the *Udbodhan* almost single-handed; and Swami Akhandananda, who, the first to catch Swamiji's

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

spirit, had on his own initiative undertaken arduous works of social service. Swamiji praised them all to others. One reads, for instance, in a letter Sister Nivedita wrote to Swami Akhandananda from England:

All through the voyage, I have been intending to write to you—and tell you how often and how warmly Swamiji has spoken of you for the way in which you have struggled to do and carry out the ideas that we have all received. He seems to place great confidence in you—and to approve of all your efforts in a very special way.

I am sure it would have done you good if you could have heard even one of the many things he has said.⁹

But to Swamiji's mind nothing had been enough. He was well aware how few years were left him to lay the foundations of his mission, to secure his work "firm as adamant" and to train others to carry it forward in the face of all future difficulties. "To work! In full speed, and with undaunted zeal!" he had written in May of 1897 to one of his brothers. "Let us once throw the country into convulsions of energy."¹⁰ And in October of the same year, "I am in a tremendous hurry, I want to work at hurricane speed, and I want fearless hearts."¹¹ He had thrashed against caution, against misgivings and delays as though the power coursing through him were running a race with death, as indeed it was.

Perhaps the most frustrating obstacle to Swami Vivekananda's Indian work had been his uncertain health. In mid-February of 1897 as his ship, the *Mombassa*, was leaving Madras for Calcutta, he had said to his friend Professor Sundararama Iyer in reply to the query Will you continue your Mission work in South India?: "Have no doubt about that. I shall take some rest in the Himalayan region, and then burst on the country everywhere like an avalanche."¹² But a short rest had not restored his health, and illness had often exiled him to the foothills of northern India, away from the stifling plains—and

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

away from the centers of activity. He had not returned to South India, nor had he been able to "burst on the country everywhere like an avalanche." The precarious state of Swamiji's health during his first stay in the Himalayan region is clear from the following letter to Mrs. Bull, which, since it has not heretofore been published, I give in full. (Although Swamiji gives Alambazar Math, Calcutta, as his address, his letter, as will be clear, was written from Darjeeling.)

Alambazar Math
Calcutta 26th March '97

Dear Mrs Bull—The demonstrations & national jubiliations over me are over, at least I had to cut them short as my health broke completely down. The result of this steady work in the west and the tremendous work of a month in India upon the Bengalee constitution is "diabetes"—It is a hereditary foe and is destined to carry me off at best in a few years time. Eating only meat and drinking no water seems to be the only way to prolong life and above all perfect rest for the brain. I am giving my brain the needed rest in Darjeeling from where I am writing you now.

I am so glad to hear about Saradananda's success. Give him my best love & do not allow him [to] do too much work. The Bengalee body is not the same as the American.

Mr Chatterjy (Mohini) came to see me in Calcutta and he was very friendly—I gave him your message. He is quite willing to work with me. Nothing more to write only I am bent upon seeing my monastery started and as soon as that is done I come to America once more.

By the by I would send to you a young lady from England, one Gertrude Orchard. She has been a governess—but she has talent in art &c. and I wished her to try her chance in America. I will give her a letter to yourself and Mrs [Florence] Adams.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

My love to Mrs Adams, Miss Thursby, Miss Farmer (the noble sister) and all the rest of our friends.

With eternal love and gratitude

Yours affly¹³
Vivekananda

Discomfort and pain Swamiji could well endure; but enforced rest was a torment. "I am soon going down to the plains," he once wrote during a stay at Almora. "I am a fighter and shall die in the battlefield. Does it behove me to sit up here like a zenana lady?"¹⁴ But again and again he was forced by illness to direct the many aspects and details of his work from a distance.

Other blows there had been. For lack of funds, some projects could not be carried out; others proceeded slowly and only by dint of hard struggle and sacrifice on the part of his brothers and disciples. And shortly before he left India, the municipality, led largely by inimical orthodox Hindus, had decided to levy a property tax on the Belur Math, the newly built headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order, on the grounds that it was not a religious institution at all but was, rather, Swami Vivekananda's private garden-house—the land and buildings being held in his name.¹⁵ Such a tax at this point would be worse than financially disastrous: if at the very outset the Math were officially declared to be a nonreligious institution, its enemies would have a weapon as handy and as devastating as anyone of ill will could wish for.

It was with the disappointments and frustrations of the past two years weighing on his heart, the burdens and anxieties of the present weighing on his mind, that Swami Vivekananda set out once again for the West. He was certain that he had done his best for his country; he was not yet certain that all he had struggled to establish would not collapse.

"My great anxiety is this," he had written to Swami Brahmananda in August of 1898, "the work has somehow been started, but it should go on and progress even when we are

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

not here; such thoughts worry me day and night.”¹⁶ Such thoughts continued to worry Swamiji even as he sailed across the Indian Ocean and up the Red Sea. Perhaps nowhere (certainly nowhere that I know of) is this aspect of his mood during the voyage more clearly reflected than in one or two passages in Swami Saradananda’s letters to Mrs. Bull, which I have had the good fortune to come upon and which have not, I believe, been heretofore known.

Swami Saradananda had first met Mrs. Bull in America in 1896 and admired her greatly. He had for long addressed her as Granny (presumably because she was grandmother to the infant Edwina, her daughter’s child, who had died in 1898), and in his letters to her he referred to himself as “the monk, your boy.” To “dear Granny” he regularly confided everything that he thought would interest her, and knowing of her reverence and love for Swamiji and of her active interest in his work, it was natural for him to write of “the Prophet’s” every mood. Not all of Swami Saradananda’s letters to Mrs. Bull have come down to us, but for our present purpose those that are available are enough, as details do not here concern us.

The first extant letter that contains a passage pertinent to the present story is dated July 12, 1899:

A word from the Swami from Madras to inform he was doing well with the rest, but none from Aden, though they must be nearing Suez by this time or have passed the canal. [Actually the *Golconda* was not to reach Suez for two days.] We have decided not to send the trust deed to him to England from what we have gathered about his unwillingness to sign it at present. . . . So let it be thus, and please do not give him any hint of what you know from my last two.¹⁷

Swami Saradananda’s “last two” no longer exist; but since the mail left Calcutta for America once a week, they had most

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

probably been dated June 28 and July 5. Swamiji's letter from Aden arrived at Belur in due course, and on July 19 Swami Saradananda again wrote to Mrs. Bull:

Swami writes from Aden that the sea breeze, the cold baths (sea) and the dumbbells have already restored him a good deal. He has written me a very cross letter from Aden. . . .

I am going through a great anxiety about the work, on account of this new attitude of the Swami. He says "his eyes have been opened alas! too late"—that even Brahmananda & myself think we have placed him under a great obligation, whenever we do the simplest thing—that we are all selfish &c. I cannot see how far this will go; but pray to Sri R. to make all things right. I cannot say, though, I have the same hopeful prospect of the work to my human sight. But the Divine brings out good out of evils & so we need not despair. . . .

The Ramakrishna Mission has been reopened & I have been invited to give my talks again from the coming Sunday. But I do not know how far I will be able to impress others just at present, with my downfallen spirit. I feel such a desire now to go to the old Sannyasin life or to go away to some other country where I can be my own master. But I see too I must never do it. It would be unfaithfulness to Sri R. and the Swami too.¹⁸

One can infer the thrashing power of Swamiji's crossness and impatience from its effect upon Swami Saradananda and, later on, from Swamiji's own letters. Yet all the while, as we have seen, there were other sides to his state of mind. In the vastness of his spirit he could harbor many moods simultaneously, all of them cosmic in depth and meaning, all as significant as his mission itself. And however painful the outward circumstances of his life may have been, whatever his physical or mental suffering, there was always an immeasurable, indeed

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

infinite, reservoir of pure joy and serenity within him, in which he could at will become immersed and from which he invariably gave without stint. "Two years of physical suffering have taken away twenty years off my life," he had written to a friend in April of 1899. "Well, but the soul changeth not, does it? It is there, the same madcap Atman, mad upon one idea, intent and intense...."¹⁹

5

The *Golconda* arrived at Aden on July 8. Here no one, "white or black," was allowed to land. But as Swamiji pointed out, the loss was not great, for Aden was a colorless and dreary place where "there are not many things worth seeing."¹ Since no cargo was allowed into the ship, she soon steamed off into the Red Sea, where, mercifully, and unusually at this time of year when men had been known to go mad from the heat, there blew a cool north breeze from the Mediterranean. The worst of the voyage was over, and an air of peace seems to have prevailed. It was here that Swamiji and Mr. Bogesh had their chat about the scientific verification of miracles, and here also, as Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod, that Swamiji talked on the subject of charity and, the following day, became absorbed in composing a poem in Bengali. Nivedita's letter had the date line: "In the Red Sea, nearing the Gulf of Suez. 13th July, 1899." "Dear Yum Yum," she wrote,

You see where we are. On Sunday I stayed quietly on board, and so saw nothing of Aden. Swami is busy writing a grand Bengali poem about the Mother. We were having a talk yesterday, and he said, talking of charity, "The Gita says there are three kinds of charity, Sattvic, Rajasic, and Tamasic. The Tamasic kind is impulsive, thinking nothing but of one's desire to help, no consequences, no anything. The Rajasic is for one's own glory. And the Sattvic must be done to the right person in the right way

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and at the proper time. It seems to me I have only known one person who ever knew exactly how to give, so quietly and never making a mistake." [Swamiji no doubt meant either Miss MacLeod or Mrs. Bull.]²

On Friday, July 14, the steamer reached Suez. Here again strict plague regulations were in force, this time on both sides, for there had been an outbreak of plague in Egypt. Not only was no one allowed to disembark, but no one from the shore was allowed to so much as touch the ship, and no one on the ship was allowed to touch its cargo. "It meant a good deal of extra trouble for the ship's sailors," Swamiji wrote.

They have to serve as coolies, lift up the cargo by means of cranes and drop it, without touching, on the Suez boats which carry it ashore. . . . It will take them the whole day to unload the cargo in this slow process. The ship can easily cross the Canal in the night, if she be provided with a searchlight; but if that is to be fitted, the Suez people will have to touch the ship—there, you have ten days' quarantine. She is therefore not to start in the night, and we must remain as we are in this Suez harbour for twenty-four hours!³

But for part of that time there was great sport and entertainment for the passengers. "There are innumerable fish and sharks swimming in [the harbour]," Swamiji recounted. "Nowhere else on earth are sharks in such plenty as in this port and in the port of Sydney, in Australia." A number of second-class passengers, equipped with a formidable make-shift hook and a two-pound hunk of pork, managed to land a huge, flat-headed shark, much to the fascination and excitement of the passengers—second- and first-class alike. In his *Memoirs* Swamiji describes the capture of the shark from start to finish and in vivid detail; indeed his powers of description are such that on reading this long passage one seems to

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

live through the whole fascinating, repelling affair until, after it is over, one feels somewhat as did he himself: "I had my meal almost spoilt that day—everything smelt of that shark."⁴

The next day the *Golconda* passed through the Suez Canal to Port Said and out into the Western world. The East was left behind. "One type of manners and customs and modes of living ends here," Swamiji commented, "and another type of features and temperament, food and dress, customs and habits begins—we enter Europe."⁵

The Mediterranean was calm and the skies clear. "It was dark when we approached Sicily," Nivedita related, "and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami, while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light. 'Messina must thank *me*!' he said, 'It is I who give her all her beauty!'"⁶

The *Golconda* stopped at Naples, where, the incubation period of Calcutta plague germs being well over and no one aboard sick or dead, passengers were allowed to land. The ship then went on to Marseilles and, the next morning, through the Strait of Gibraltar, where Swamiji, excited, met Sister Nivedita on deck with the words, "Have you seen them? Have you seen them? Landing there and crying Din! Din! The Faith! The Faith!" "And for half-an-hour," she remembered, "I was swept away into his dramatisations of the Moorish invasions of Spain."⁷

"And thence," as he wrote, "straight at London"⁸—over moderately quiet seas. On Monday, July 31, after a voyage of forty-two days, the good ship *Golconda* landed at Tilbury Dock on the Thames.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

1

It would be reasonable to suppose that Swamiji was met at Tilbury Dock by a crowd of people, for hundreds were the friends and disciples who had given him a grand farewell reception on his departure from London some two and a half years earlier, and many were those who had shed tears and pleaded for his quick return. The fact was, however, that few, if any, of those friends and disciples met the *Golconda*. One reason was the time of year: Swamiji himself had written from Port Said to Mr. Edward T. Sturdy, "As you know sure, I shall not have many friends staying now in London. . . . A stay in England under these circumstances is not advisable."¹ Yet he must have been surprised to find that Sturdy himself was not in the city to welcome him. Indeed the conspicuous absence of this old friend, disciple, and one-time manager of the London work was perhaps the first indication Swamiji had that something was seriously amiss. That the London work had collapsed he had long known, but he had not expected to find so bleak a ruin as was to confront him; nor had he dreamed of personal hostility on the part of Sturdy, which, as time passed, was to become unmistakable. There can be no question that the blow to Swamiji was severe and that his disciple's tragedy—for that is what it was—formed an extremely painful part of his life at this period. In order to tell the story of this unhappy episode—and I believe that before continuing with our history it should be told—we shall have to go back several years.

It had been in March of 1895 that Mr. Sturdy introduced himself by letter to Swamiji, who was then in New York. A member of the Theosophical Society in London, Sturdy had

traveled to India in the 1890s to devote himself to the study of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy and had chanced in his wanderings upon two monks of the Ramakrishna Order. "I was living for some time in India with two of your gurubhais," he wrote to Swamiji, "Shivanandaji and Satchidanandaji [the latter was not, actually, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna's], and found them both good men and worthy of respect. This was in Kumaon [near Almora]."² It is more probable that Mr. Sturdy had lived *near*, rather than *with*, the two Swamis, but in any event he had often talked with them. Living in that holy environment, in the pure air of the Himalayas, he had soon come to look upon himself as a man completely established in austerity, renunciation, and monkhood. Many years later he wrote to Miss MacLeod, "I remember the ridicule and contempt with which I received a palmist's prediction on my last voyage from India [in the first part of 1894] when she said, 'You will be married twice, have children and suffer much through women.' [I mention this] because it recalls my complete confidence in myself that I had at that time, the confidence in the road I was to follow, the complete immunity to woman's influence I thought I had reached and would certainly continue in it."³ Cocksure where even saints are prayerful, Mr. Sturdy had tempted the gods. Within a few months he was married to a young woman named Lucie, who promptly bore him the first of two children. By the time he wrote to Swamiji, introducing himself, his days of freedom, whether he knew it yet or not, were gone. But however that may have been, he soon invited Swamiji to become his guest in England, suggesting that he stay long enough "to establish either a [Vedanta] class or a Society."⁴

"I received your last duly," Swamiji replied, "and as I had a previous arrangement to come to Europe by the end of this August, I take your invitation as a Divine Call."⁵

Around the second or third week of September, 1895, Swamiji arrived in England from Paris and evidently went by train directly to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sturdy, who were

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

then living in Reading, about thirty-six miles west of London. Until the end of October he lived with the Sturdys more or less quietly, giving a few small classes, of which we have only a hint or two, translating the *Narada-Bhakti-Sutras* with his host and writing "copious commentaries" on it. On October 22 he delivered a public lecture at Princes' Hall in London and the next day was acclaimed in glowing terms by the daily papers. His London work was launched.

In the last week of October Swamiji moved to rented rooms at 80 Oakley Street, Chelsea (London), and there held crowded classes. In addition, he lectured at clubs and private homes—notably at Lady Isabel Margesson's house at 63 Saint George's Road, where Sister Nivedita first heard him. Although his public work was not on a large scale that late fall of 1895, he successfully laid the foundation for the future, and he was pleased.

"In England my work is really splendid," he wrote to Alasinga, "I am astonished myself at it.... I am sure of more work in England than in America. Bands and bands come, and I have no room for so many; so they squat on the floor, ladies and all.... I have sent for a Sannyasin from Calcutta and shall leave him to work in London."⁶

At the close of November, Swamiji sailed for America, where he worked from early December through March of 1896, keeping in touch all the while with Mr. Sturdy, whom he addressed affectionately as "Blessed and Beloved." He then visited England for the second time, arriving on April 20 at the Sturdys' house. There, to his delight, he found Swami Saradananda, who, three weeks earlier, had come from India at his call. The two Swamis stayed with the Sturdys until the first week in May, when they moved to Lady Isabel Margesson's West End house in London, which Mr. Sturdy had rented for five months (from the first of May until the first of October) for Swamiji and his classes. Miss Henrietta Muller, a wealthy, middle-aged Theosophist, whom Swamiji had met at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and of whom we

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

shall hear more later, sublet some rooms in the house, thus helping, as Mr. Sturdy said, to reduce the cost. Through May, June, and the first part of July Swamiji held classes there regularly. He also gave a number of talks at various clubs, and every Sunday delivered a lecture in a public hall.

From mid-July to mid-September he vacationed in Europe, traveling with Captain and Mrs. J. H. Sevier, two devoted English disciples, and, for a part of the time, Miss Muller. (Miss Muller's name is spelled in various records both with an umlaut over the *u* and without one. I shall follow the latter school.) On his return to England, Swamiji stayed for a few days with the Seviers in Hampstead, and then visited Miss Muller in Wimbledon—a residential suburb of London where Miss Margaret Noble also lived. Here he gave two “drawing-room” talks and a class. Soon, however, he reopened his London work.

In the first week of October a number of his friends took a large room or rather, as Mr. Sturdy wrote to Mrs. Bull, “three rooms, knocked into one,” at 39 Victoria Street, for the purpose of Swamiji's lectures and classes. As for his living quarters, a basement flat was rented nearby at 14 Greycoat Gardens, Westminster, where he lived with Swami Abhedananda, who had come from India, and Mr. Josiah J. Goodwin. The latter had sailed with Swami Saradananda for America on July 4 and had, fortunately, returned—fortunately, because Mr. Goodwin, an expert stenographer, was to take down Swamiji's London lectures during this fall season, even as he had taken down the New York lectures of the preceding winter. The London lectures, fourteen of which are included in the book *Jnana Yoga*, formed an important part of Swamiji's exposition of monistic Vedanta. Clearly, he gave the English people strong spiritual food, and, as clearly, they liked it: by the end of the year his following was large and enthusiastic.

“The work in London has been a roaring success,” he wrote on November 28 to his American friends Mary and Harriet Hale. “The English are not so bright as the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Americans, but once you touch their heart, it is yours for ever. Slowly I have gained, and is it not remarkable that by six months' work altogether I should have a steady class of about 120 persons, apart from public lectures?... My ideas about the English have been revolutionised. I now understand why the Lord has blessed them above all other races. They are steady, sincere to the backbone, with great depths of feeling—only with a crust of stoicism on the surface; if that is broken, you have your man.”⁸

There could have been, had Swamiji wished, many more months of a successful season in London. But he was guided by commands known to himself alone. “Of course everybody here thinks it foolish to give [the work] up just now the ‘boom’ is on,” he wrote to Miss MacLeod on December 3, “but the Dear Lord says ‘Start for Old India.’ I obey.”⁹ Thus on December 16, 1896, accompanied by Captain and Mrs. Sevier and followed by Mr. Goodwin, Swamiji sailed for India.

Swami Vivekananda left today [Mr. Sturdy wrote to an American friend]... He had a magnificent reception [on December 13] in the Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours. There were about five hundred people there, and a good many friends were away from London. His influence has sunk very deep into many hearts. We are going straight ahead with his work... Your presumption is correct. I am heavy-hearted today at the loss of the noblest friend and the purest teacher I have met in this incarnation. I must have stored some exceptional merit in the past to receive such a blessing now. What I longed for all my life I have found in the Swami.¹⁰

At a later date Sturdy was to confide to Miss MacLeod: “When Swami left for India, with Goodwin, I laid my head on his breast and sobbed.”¹¹

Swamiji had been confident that his teachings had taken

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

root in London and would there grow. Indeed he had expected even more to come of his London work than of his work in America. During an interview in Calcutta in late February (or early March) of 1897, he had declared that if qualified preachers could be had, there was greater likelihood of the Vedanta work being permanently established in England than in America.¹² A week or so earlier in Madras he had been even more optimistic: "If I die tomorrow and cannot send any more Sannyasins, still the English work will go on,"¹³ he had said. Yet in the fall of 1896, even as his London work was "growing apace," "becoming *solid* and respected too, . . . great scholars . . . sympathising," and the classes "becoming bigger as they go on," he had made a truer prediction. "Of course," he had written to Alasinga, "as soon as I leave, most of this fabric will tumble down."¹⁴ And tumble down it did. At once.

Informing Miss MacLeod about the progress of the work, Mr. Sturdy wrote on January 25, 1897:

We reopened the room at 39 Victoria Street on Jan 12 and Abhedananda gave a very creditable first lecture. . . . But the attendance has been very meagre indeed from the beginning, showing how much was dependent upon personality. Of course the weather has been bad—sometimes foggy and sometimes wet and many people may be away from town. . . . Meanwhile we just fire away and do what is to be done—we cannot command out may deserve success.¹⁵

But success did not come. There was no organization to hold things together; Mr. Sturdy was a failure as a leader, and as people drifted away, there was no money to pay expenses. "The London work is not doing well at all, I hear,"¹⁶ Swamiji wrote to Margaret Noble on May 3, 1897. A month later matters had become worse. "What about the work in London?" he asked Marie Halboister, another of his young English

disciples, and answered his own question: "I am afraid it is going to pieces."¹⁷ Again to Miss Halboister in July: "The work in London had to go slow—for various reasons, and last though not the least was *l'argent, mon amie!* When I am there *l'argent* comes in somehow, to keep the mare going. Now everybody shrugs his shoulder. I must come again and try my best to revive the work."¹⁸

Mr. Sturdy was much put out that Swamiji had not done just that in the spring of 1897. That Swamiji was ill, that he was desperately trying to start his work in India, that the immense effort required to restore the London work as well could have been suicidal, that the doctors had forbidden him to go to England that spring—none of these circumstances seem to have impressed Mr. Sturdy. Angry, he stopped writing to India. "I am so sorry the doctors would not allow my going over with the Raja of Khetri to England, and that has made Sturdy mad,"¹⁹ Swamiji wrote to Miss MacLeod in July of 1897; and in the same month to Marie Halboister: "Sturdy's thermometer is now below zero, it seems. He seems to be greatly disappointed with my non-arrival in England this summer. What could I do?"²⁰ After a time Swamiji received a note from Mr. Sturdy. "But it was so stiff and cold," he told Miss Noble. "It seems he is disappointed at the collapse of the London work."²¹ Sturdy was more than disappointed, he was without hope. Sometime in July he sent Swami Abhedananda to New York, thereby capitulating to what appeared to be inevitable failure. "It seems that the English work is impossible without me,"²² Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Bull on August 19.

Toward the close of 1897 Sturdy (possibly with Lucie and, by now, their two infants) took off for a round-the-world tour, sailing from San Francisco on December 7, as he wrote to Mrs. Bull, for the Orient.²³ (The photograph of Mr. Sturdy which is reproduced in this book was taken in Japan during this period.) It would appear that Swamiji, knowing of Sturdy's travels, sent word to him to stop off in India, perhaps even invited him to go on the proposed trip to Kashmir with the American

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

disciples and Sister Nivedita. From somewhere within sight of India, Sturdy sent his reply. His letter is not available, but Swamiji's comment on it, contained in a letter to Mrs. Bull, tells us all we need to know of his predicament. (I shall give here Swamiji's full letter, for although only one paragraph pertains to Sturdy, no part of it has previously been published.)

Darjeeling
the 4th April '98

My dear Dhira Mata—

I am afraid you are getting roasted down there in the heat of Calcutta. Here it is nice & cool and rather chill when it rains; which it does almost every day. Yesterday the view of the snows was simply superb and it is the most picturesque city in the world, there is such a mass of colour everywhere especially in the dress of the Lepchas & Bhutias and the Paharees. Had it not been for the awful corrugated iron roofs everywhere it will be twenty times more picturesque.

My health was not bad in Calcutta, here it is the same; only the sugar has entirely disappeared, the specific gravity being only 13. I slept very well last night too and the morning ride up or climb of a few miles is proving too much for my adipose tissues. The flannel cloth only made me worse, so I have given them up and have gone to my summer dress and am all right.

I have sent you Sturdy's letter already—poor fellow—I do not know what to do for him. He is really “living in a desert of his own making”—you see, one thing is not good for every one. Marriage has indeed proved a hell for Sturdy. And he can not come although “he is skirting the coast of India.” Lord help the poor boy.—May He cut all his bonds—and make him free soon. Aye it is good that he is feeling the bondage—and not “hugging and kissing its spokes of agony.”

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

I gave a little lecture to the Hindus here yesterday and I told them all their defects purposely and with their permission. I hope it will make them howl.

Miss Muller has taken a bungalow here and she is coming on Wednesday. I do not know whether Miss Noble is coming with her. She [Miss Noble] had better be your guest in Kashmir as according to our plan.

Have you got that place yet or changed? I am going to Kashmir anyway as I have promised.

I will be here only a few days and then I come to Calcutta, to be there only a week and I start for the N. W. Of course this is not the time to see anything in the N.W.P. [North-West Frontier Province] everything is burning there. Yet that heat is much healthier than that of Bengal.

Ever yours in the Lord²⁴

Vivekananda

A few months later when Swamiji was seriously thinking of returning to the West, Miss MacLeod wrote to Sturdy at his request. Sturdy's reply from England was dated October 18, 1898:

... It is on account of the importance of the information conveyed in [your letter of August 28] about Swamiji and his plans that I have put off writing from day to day....

I do not see any possibility of my being able to join in any work which would take me for many months at any time out of England, so that if Swamiji decided to make Boston his centre from which to work and write I am afraid I should not be able to help him as much as I should like. If on the other hand he decided to make London his centre, I should be glad if he would make my house his home or if he preferred I should see that he got some comfortable place elsewhere and in either case I should be always at his service and only too delighted to

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

be everything I could to him. But I feel diffidence in making any suggestion, when I feel how much greater progress Vedanta is making in U.S.A. than it is making here, for we have nothing going on or organised now....

I understand thoroughly all that you write about Swami. I know exactly the complete absence of interference with which he should be allowed to live in whoever's house he may dwell, and how much congenial companionship helps him. He would have all that freedom in my house.

But many things have come too late for me in this incarnation; there was a time when I had entirely got adrift from all worldly ties and obligations; I ought to have met Swami then, instead of only his gurubhais; what a gain it would have been to everybody; but the out-workings of the past come inevitably to everybody—death to Goodwin, vexations to me!²⁵

Although Sturdy seems now to have been looking upon his marriage as a fate equal to, if not worse than, death (Goodwin had died of typhoid fever at Ootacamund on June 2 of 1898), he had not yet turned his bitterness of heart outward against his Guru. Indeed during the next five months or so he did not appear less than friendly. As we have seen, Swamiji's voyage to England was postponed, first, because of poor health, second, because of the difficulty in securing passage. In the meanwhile, Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod visited London in February of 1899 and there came to know Sturdy quite well; indeed his friendship with Miss MacLeod stood for a time on a first name basis. In March, Mrs. Bull was a guest in his house (then in Kensington, a residential borough of London), and all spent "a most happy time." "Lucie quite took to her," Sturdy wrote to "dear Jo Jo," and thought her "the nicest and most considerate guest we have ever had in our house"²⁶—a remark that may or may not have been intentionally barbed.

A few unpublished letters belonging to the period between the end of March and Swamiji's arrival in England are

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

available to me, and although these give little hint of the trouble that was to follow, and that was even then brewing, a number of passages from them will supply a brief history of events.

Sturdy to "Jo Jo," March 21, 1899:

I have not heard a word of Miss Müller, except that she invited Mrs. & Miss Mary Noble to visit her and was gracious & showed no animus. Mrs. Bull will have written you that. . . .

By the way, I had a letter from Miss Waldo [a prominent American disciple of Swamiji's] asking with some perturbation about Miss Müller. I have replied by this mail which will calm her troubled spirit! . . .

Swami cannot have received my letter before his proposed leaving for Madras. I hope he does before he leaves India. I showed it to Mrs. Bull before posting: it was just on the lines we discussed. If he gets it he will set out with some confidence as to what he is coming to do and also set him at rest in any doubts he may have as to the reception friends may give him here.²⁷

(Miss Ellen Waldo's perturbation about Henrietta Muller was not without good cause. Miss Muller, whom Swamiji had occasion to warn Nivedita against as a woman of "violent temper," "overbearing conduct," and "awfully vacillating mind,"²⁸ had followed him to India in 1897. She had at first contributed financially to Swamiji's work, but later, not finding things in India to her liking, had, at the close of 1898, publicly defected from his cause. "What a pity Miss Müller should advertise her foolishness in the papers!" Mrs. Sevier had written to Miss MacLeod from Almora on January 1, 1899. "The 'Indian Social Reformer' has a paragraph respecting her—viz, 'to our Christian brethren we beg to offer a Christmas present in the shape of news, which we have received from the most authentic source, that Miss Müller has completely severed her connection with Swami Vivekananda's movement to spread

Hinduism, and that she has returned to her Christian faith'—etc. etc. We have not seen Miss Müller's letter to the 'Statesman' nor the reply to it, in the 'Indian Mirror.' ")²⁹

There was some confusion about the passage money for the Swamis. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Sister Nivedita had written, with Swamiji's approval, to Mr. Sturdy, suggesting that the money for Swami Turiyananda's ticket be paid out of funds held in London for the Vedanta work. Mr. Sturdy, alarmed, wrote to Mrs. Bull, who evidently assured him that the matter would be otherwise taken care of. He was, for the time, much relieved.

Sturdy to Mrs. Bull, April 13:

Many thanks for your reply which has set me at rest on the point of the fare moneys for Swamiji & Turiyananda. I am confirmed in fancying that Nivedita was trying to remove any hindrance to their starting but did not know details & did not like to inquire into them.

Since writing you I have a very short note from Swamiji, acknowledging my invitation & agreeing with its general outlines of work, but he said he felt he was getting stronger & was inclined to remain a little longer in Calcutta....

Miss Müller has written Mrs. Ashton Jonson hoping for an interview; the latter was a little doubtful of any good and afraid she might deal the former some hard knocks if criticisms were brought up about Swami. I advised the interview and thought nothing of the sort might possibly be broached....

Miss Noble's letter is full of life & enthusiasm. What a fine full nature it is....

I am ready to receive Turiyananda whenever he may come. I think this is understood but I shall repeat when I write to India by tomorrow's mail.³⁰

In the meantime, Miss MacLeod, ebulliently but, one thinks, unwisely, forwarded to Sturdy, no doubt for his

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

entertainment, Nivedita's long, chatty, and fairly intimate letter dated March 5 to 8, in which she had mentioned her conversation with Swamiji about the passage money. Mr. Sturdy seems to have been a good deal more disturbed than entertained. I shall quote his subsequent letter to Mrs. Bull at some length, for it reveals a less than enthusiastic state of mind.

Sturdy to Mrs. Bull, April 16:

Since writing you and receiving your reply I have received the enclosed letter of Nivedita's from Miss MacLeod.

It gives details about conversation with Swamiji about the passage money which Nivedita did not write me; in fact she clearly states in her letter to me that she is writing entirely upon her own responsibility. Do you think they need any authority from you to use the money you referred to?

My position here is this—I know from old experience that as soon as the Swami arrives here, plenty of money will be needed. There will be two to arrange expenses for.

Turiyananda I have already agreed to send on to U.S.A. when the time comes. He will probably require some outfitting also. The same applies to Swami. He may elect suddenly to go to U.S.A.: he will probably also need new outfit. On top of this Longmans may need money if another edition of Raja Yoga should be needed. Or Swami may write a book here which should be published at once.

I do not know where I could raise any donations amongst Swami's friends amounting to anything substantial and it would be unwise to try.

I am not able to reduce my own living expenditures below the present, without a change which would involve others & probably would not be wise in the end and so I am left not a very large margin to donate personally.

Looking at these points I want to be ready for the

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

campaign that is to come and not cripple it. So I should like to hear again from you, just what you think. It is possible they have started by this time as Nivedita spoke of April and this letter to Miss MacLeod is dated *March 5*.³¹

Mrs. Bull no doubt again assured Sturdy that the Swami's passage money need not be taken out of the London funds. Nor need he have fretted himself about Swami Turiyananda's clothes. Swami Saradananda was to write to Mrs. Bull in May: "My dresses fit [Turiyananda] so well, I am giving him everything; so you will find him wearing the same red coats & trousers & overcoats & all."³²

Time passed. When at last Swamiji sailed from Calcutta he sent a cablegram to Miss MacLeod: "Started. Wire Sturdy."³³ The instruction was at once carried out, and shortly Sturdy wrote to Swamiji, addressing his letter to the *Golconda* at Port Said. This letter, as far as I know, is not available, but from Swamiji's reply, dated July 14 and published in volume eight of the *Complete Works*, it is obvious that he considered Mr. Sturdy to be as friendly and cooperative as ever. "I think you are absolutely needed to gather up, as it were, the American work," he wrote. "If you can, therefore, you ought to come over with me..."³⁴ Whether Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda expected to stay at Hampstead with Mr. Sturdy, as they had been invited to do, is not clear—nor was it clear, it would seem, to Mr. Sturdy himself.

Sturdy to Mrs. Bull, July 8:

We leave for Wales on 18th....

I am no further on regarding Swami. I only know that he is on his way, together with Miss Noble, Turiyananda & a brother of Saradananda, a "layman" I presume, named Chakravarti. What he wishes to do, where to rest awhile &c, I leave for time to disclose.

If they come direct to London they are due here on

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

July 27th—"the dog days"—when everybody has fled to the fields & the seas....

Your visit & also Miss MacLeod's [in February and March], left us all with the happiest impressions and it is nice to think of the links that unite us all with Swami at the head of our round table.³⁵

The knight of the round table was, it seems, somewhat errant. But let us leave him for a time in Wales and return to Tilbury Dock and the arrival of the *Golconda*.

2

If Swamiji was surprised not to see Edward Sturdy, he was no doubt more surprised, and in this case delighted, to find that two of his American disciples, Christine Greenstidel and Mrs. Mary Funke, had crossed the Atlantic to greet him. This was not the first time these two young women had traveled far in order to be near Swamiji. They had first heard him lecture in Detroit, their home town, in March of 1894, but although they had been profoundly impressed, they had not, at that time, approached him. Over a year later, learning from a friend that he was spending the summer in Thousand Island Park, they resolved to seek him out. "At last, after a weary search, we found him," Mary Funke later recounted. On a dark and rainy night, tired and drenched, frightened at their temerity, they arrived at the house atop a small hill where, with a group of some ten disciples, he was living and teaching. "We have come to you," one of them said to him, "just as we would go to Jesus if he were still on the earth and ask him to teach us." Swamiji warmly accepted them into the group, and during the weeks they spent with him he initiated them and gave the vows of brahmacharya to Miss Greenstidel, who became known thenceforth as Sister Christine. Theirs was the kind of temerity that immensely pleased him. "My disciples," he would say of them in later years, "who traveled hundreds of miles to find me,

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

and they came in the night and in the rain.”¹ And now, having seen an item in an Indian magazine that he was to sail from India for England, and hearing, also, alarming reports of his illness, they had crossed the ocean to find him again.

Nivedita’s widowed mother, her sister Mary (sometimes called May and sometimes Min), and her young brother Richmond were surely also at Tilbury Dock to meet the *Golconda*; and, as surely, the whole party went off to Wimbledon to the Nobles’ house at 21A High Street. In 1899 Wimbledon had the air of a charming English town, full of trees, history, old houses, curving roads, and a large wooded common where one could take long meandering walks. The Nobles’ house, however, was, from the front at any rate, singularly unlovely. Situated in a barrackslke three-story brick building, it was central in a row of five identical two-story residential units, each of which, two windows wide, rose above a street-level shop. (A present-day photograph of this mid-nineteenth century drabness, which at this writing still stands, is here reproduced. The Nobles lived behind the four windows over what is today “The Village Stores” and what was in 1899 a saddle shop owned by a Mr. B. C. Blackwell.)

To Mrs. Noble’s dismay, 21A High Street was too small to accommodate all the travelers, and thus quarters were found for the two Swamis at “The Lymes”—a spacious, airy, old-fashioned roominghouse with a large garden, about a fifteen-minute walk away. “[We] have beautiful lodgings here,” Swamiji wrote to Miss MacLeod.² (“The Lymes,” it has been learned through recent research, was located at 35 Woodside, on the corner of Springfield Road. The house was demolished before 1962, and where the garden had been now stand two small, disenchanted blocks of flats.) The two American women also took rooms in Wimbledon. As for Swami Saradananda’s brother, he stayed with the Nobles for a week and then left for Boston.

There was nothing for Swamiji to do at this place and season but rest. “Sturdy is away, Mrs. Johnson [Mrs. Ashton Jonson]

and everybody. Margo is rather worried at that," he wrote on August 3 to Joe (Miss MacLeod). "...I have become for the present a Shunyavadi, a believer in nothingness, or void. No plans, no after-thought, no attempt for anything, *laissez-faire* to the fullest."³ The good effects of the trip were still his. "He had grown very slim and looked and acted like a boy," Mrs. Funke noted in her memoirs. "He was so happy to find the voyage had brought back some of the old strength and vigor."⁴ Swamiji himself remarked upon his gain: "I have recovered quite a bit by the voyage," he told Joe. "It was brought about by the exercise on the dumb-bells and monsoon storms tumbling the steamer about the waves. Queer, isn't it? Hope it will remain."⁵

But unfortunately it did not remain; in a few days his health underwent a sharp decline, as did his spirits. He could not have been cheered by the absence of his English friends, nor by the treacherous gossip and criticism which had been spread by Miss Henrietta Muller (who lived in Wimbledon) and which must surely have reached his ears, even as it had reached the ears of the Noble family. "My little mother says she is humiliated to the verge of tears by such criticism of Swami," Nivedita was to write later on to Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Bull. "If *she* had been rich, he shd not have had to go into rooms!"⁶

What Miss Muller's grievances were exactly, I do not know; but whatever they may have been, she had returned to England in the early part of 1899 filled with resentment. A stream of criticism (not all of it original) of India, of Swamiji, of his gurubhais, of his work, of the Math, flowed from her lips: the swamis were not ascetic enough; the new Math at Belur had *three* big rooms; Swamiji intervened in the affairs of his family; Hinduism was based on phallic worship, and so on. To Dr. Lewis G. Janes, a staunch and levelheaded friend of Swamiji's, who was to hear Miss Muller lecture on India in 1901, it was clear that she was mentally unbalanced.⁷ Possibly this was also clear to Swamiji's English friends—and yet the seeds of doubt, whatever their source, had little trouble finding favorable

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

soil; and once those seeds were sown, it was inevitable that a question should arise among the English friends as to the allocation of the money they had donated to Swamiji's Indian work—little enough as it had been. (Outside of the Seviars, who had, as it were, given their lives, Miss Muller, Mr. Sturdy, and a Miss Souter had been the principal donors.)

Mr. Sturdy, it would appear, had written to Mrs. Bull in regard to the donations, and she had sent Swamiji a copy of her reply. Swamiji's answer of August 6 to Mrs. Bull, in which he dealt with this and other harassments, has not heretofore been published:

The Lymes
Woodside
Wimbledon
6th August 99.

My dear Mother

Your letter directed to Sturdy at hand. I am very thankful for your kind words. As for me I don't know what I am to do next or anything to do at all. On board the steamer I was all right but since landing feeling quite bad again. As to mental worry there has been enough of late. The aunt whom you saw—had a deep laid plan to cheat me and she & her people contrived to sell me a nouse for 6000 Rs. or £ 400 and I bought for my mother in good faith. Then they would not give me possession, hoping that I would not go to court for shame to take forcible possession as a Sannyasin.

I do not think *I have spent even one rupee from what you and others gave me for the work.* Cap Sevier gave me 8000 Rs. with the express desire of helping my mother with. This money it seems has [also] gone to the dogs. Beyond this nothing has been spent on my family or even on *my own personal* expenses. My food &c being paid for by the Khetri raja & more than half of that went to the Math

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

every month. Only if Brahmananda spends some in the lawsuit [against the aunt] as I must not be robbed that way—if he does I will make it good anyway if I live to do it.

The money which I got in Europe & America by *lecturing* alone I spent just as I like but every cent I got for the work has been accounted for & is in the Math, & the whole thing ought to be clear as daylight.... I got a letter at Aden from Saradananda that they were preparing an account. I have not received any yet.

I have no plans yet nor care to make any. I neither wish to work. Let the Mother find other workers. I have my burden enough already.

Ever your devoted son⁸
Vivekananda

From the early days of his mission in the West, money had been a trial to Swamiji. To take money for lectures and classes that he would far rather have given freely, to keep track of money thus earned, to prevent himself from being taken advantage of right and left by unscrupulous lecture agents and managers of halls, to remember, as he seldom did, not to give whatever money he happened to have in his purse to whoever at the moment needed it—all these “botherations” had plagued him, but they were a necessary part of the new monasticism he had in mind—for without money there could be no organized work. *Mais l'argent, mon ami!* was an expression that much amused him and that he often found all too apt. Returning to India in 1897, he had divested himself as far as possible of all direct handling of funds, turning over to Swami Brahmananda whatever money for the work he had at hand and later (December, 1897) giving him power of attorney so that he could withdraw the Math funds (which were held in Swamiji's name) from a bank in Calcutta and thus attend to such things as the purchase of land during Swamiji's absence.⁹ This had been a convenient arrangement in many respects. One finds, for

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

instance, a revealing passage in a letter to Swami Ramakrishnananda in February of 1898 in reply to the latter's recommendation of a young man who wanted financial help. "I would be very glad to help him," Swamiji wrote, "but the fact is, I have no money; every cent I had I have made over to Raja [Swami Brahmananda], as they all say I am a spendthrift and are afraid of keeping money with me."¹⁰

But while Swamiji had been more or less free in India of handling money, the responsibility of collecting funds and disbursing them had still lain on his shoulders and weighed on his mind. Again and again he had impressed upon his brother monks the importance of keeping detailed and absolutely strict accounts. They had done so, even to the extent of curbing Swamiji's own impulse to give money to others whenever he saw an immediate need. Confident that all was in good order, Swamiji now (August 10, 1899) wrote from England to Swami Brahmananda: "Send an account to Mrs. Bull as to how much was spent on purchase of land, how much on buildings, how much on maintenance etc." In this same letter he again stressed the necessity for strict accounting. "Get the signatures of the Committee for every item of expenditure. Otherwise you also will be in for a bad name. This much is customary that people want some time or other an account of their donations. It is very wrong not to have it ready at every turn.. Make a committee of all those who are in the Math and no expenditure will be made which is not countersigned by them—none at all!"¹¹

(On the basis of the information Swami Brahmananda was to send to Mrs. Bull, she was able to prepare detailed accounts for the London people. This took time, for the going and coming of mail between the West and India was slow. Only months later, on November 21, could Swamiji write to his brother monk: "The accounts are all right. I have handed them over to Mrs. Bull who has taken charge of reporting the different parts of the accounts to different donors."¹² In the same month Swami Saradananda was to write to Mrs. Bull:

"I need not say 'may Sri R. bless you'; for the way that has been opened to you to help Mother, Swamiji & us all, and to [uphold] the honour of the cause in the West, by helping the Swami in his accounts of the public money—shows that you have been chosen by Sri R. & made the corner stone & stay of His work. I bless you Granny dear with all my heart.")¹³

While Swamiji found it entirely reasonable and proper that donors to his cause should want to know how their money had been used and intended to present accounts when the building of the Math was finished, the element of calculation and distrust implicit in the importunate questions of his English friends could not but have hurt him. Yet those who were close to him at this period seem to have felt only his undimmed radiance—nothing else. In later years Lizelle Reymond, collecting material for her biography of Nivedita, *The Dedicated*, corresponded with Mary and Richmond Noble and on the basis of their memories was able to give one or two descriptions of Swamiji. These afford us the closest glimpses we have of him during his stay in Wimbledon.

In the long summer evenings the two Swamis and the two American disciples would join the Noble family under the arbor in the garden—no doubt behind the house. There Swamiji would hold everyone spellbound with his talk, striking in each heart a responsive chord. Even "Min," who was shortly to be married, felt strongly tempted to follow this great man, giving her life to his service, as her sister had done. Mrs. Noble found in him a son who needed her motherly care. Richmond, still in his teens, found in Swamiji a Christ-like man who could answer with authority his aching questions about human life and its meaning, about the existence of God and His ways to man. He found in Swamiji, moreover, a staunch ally against the tyranny of his older sister. One day, Mlle Reymond recounts, the young Richmond jokingly complained (perhaps only half jokingly) that Nivedita, imposing Hindu customs upon her Irish family, had banned beef from

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

the menus. Swamiji laughed. "So she has been laying down the law, has she!" Thereupon he took Richmond to a small restaurant and, to the young man's astonishment, ordered a beefsteak medium-rare (*cuit à point*, Mlle Reymond's original French reads). "Eat, my boy," he said. "It's for you. I am giving you back what Nivedita has taken from you!"¹⁴

(Almost three years to the day after Richmond had first met Swamiji, he was to come to his defense against an unjust and ill-informed newspaper article. "Though I am soon to be ordained in the Orders of the Church of England," he wrote on August 1, 1902, to the editor of the offending paper, "yet having come into contact with Swami I have learnt, while still retaining my Christian Faith, to appreciate so good a man."¹⁵ In Pravrajika Atmaprana's biography, *Sister Nivedita*, one finds a more personal and impassioned appreciation of Swamiji in another letter from Richmond, written perhaps many years later: "That my sister should have obeyed his call was nothing wonderful," he wrote, "for I myself saw Swamiji, and I know his power. One had only to see and to hear Swamiji, and to say to oneself, 'Behold the man.' One knew he spoke truth, for he spoke with authority, and not merely as a scholar or as a priest. Swamiji brought certainty with him, he gave assurance and confidence to the enquirer.")¹⁶

The quiet and gentle Sister Christine and the lively, charming Mary Funke added to the pleasantness of the fortnight Swamiji spent at Wimbledon. "He was seldom more spontaneous than in [Mary Funke's] presence," Christine was to write years later. " 'She is naive,' he said. . . . This amused her, for she did not spare herself in her efforts to meet his moods. Perhaps more than any of us she realised how much he needed rest and relaxation. . . . She told funny stories, often at her own expense, talked lightly and entertainingly."¹⁷

Although for the most part the English friends remained out of sight, Swamiji saw a few of them. "None of my old friends have I seen yet except Miss Souter and Max Gysic, who are in London," he wrote to Marie Halboister, who was then in

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Ottawa, Canada. "They have been very kind, as they always were. [Max Gysic was a young Swiss and "a great friend of Miss Souter."] . . . Miss Kate Steel is also away. She is coming on Thursday [August 10] or Saturday."¹⁸ Mr. Sturdy managed to come in from Wales for three days, but of the meeting between him and Swamiji we know only that, face to face with his Guru, he failed to unburden his mind.

On Wednesday, August 16, after spending a little over a fortnight in England, the two Swamis, together with the two American women, took the train to Glasgow and there set sail for New York on the small S.S. *Numidian*. The Swamis' destination was Ridgely Manor, the beautiful country home in New York State of Miss MacLeod's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett, whose invitation had been of long standing. At Ridgely Manor, as Swamiji knew, he would find the rest, the care, and the companionship he needed before deciding upon his future course. As for Nivedita, though she was "hungry for work," as she wrote to Miss MacLeod, she dutifully remained in Wimbledon for three weeks or so longer, for she was to be maid of honor at her sister's wedding. It was the turn now of Sister Christine and Mary Funke to spend serene, uninterrupted days on a ship with Swamiji, suspended, as it were, in the vast timelessness of sea and sky.

These were ten never-to-be-forgotten days spent on the ocean [Mary Funke was later to write]. Reading and exposition of the Gita occupied every morning, also reciting and translating poems and stories from the Sanskrit and chanting old Vedic hymns. The sea was smooth and at night the moonlight was entrancing. Those were wonderful evenings; the Master paced up and down the deck, a majestic figure in the moonlight stopping now and then to speak to us of the beauties of Nature. "And if all this Maya is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the Reality behind it!" he would exclaim.

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

One especially fine evening when the moon was at the full and softly mellow and golden, a night of mystery and enchantment, he stood silently for a long time drinking in the beauty of the scene. Suddenly he turned to us and said: "Why recite poetry when there," pointing to sea and sky, "is the very essence of poetry?"

We reached New York all too soon, feeling that we never could be grateful enough for those blessed, intimate ten days with the Guru.¹⁰

3

Only after Swamiji was safely out of England did Mr. Sturdy speak his mind. The correspondence that was to take place between them in the fall of 1899 was set off by a note the latter wrote to Nivedita in reply to some comment (now lost) that she had made in praise of her Guru. As far as I know, the full text of Sturdy's reply no longer exists, but a pertinent excerpt from it was copied out by Nivedita along with her answer. A directive at the top of the sheet reads: "Publish after Sturdy's death," and it is, surely, time to do so. The excerpt from his note reads as follows:

You and I take different views of the Swami and his work. I have seen very little of Sannyasa on the part of any of the Sannyasins who have visited this country, although I have heard a good deal about it. I do not want to influence your ideals in any way, but I must admit that I am disappointed in many ways, and am daily pondering how I shall make it known to the Vivekananda.¹

Fancying a cry of anguish in the above, Nivedita rushed to the rescue. Her reply was dated August 24:

As to your letter, how intense is the pain that prompted

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

it, I can only dimly and shrinkingly guess. You say "I do not want to influence your ideals in any way."

Thank God you are able to put aside any foolish hesitation of that sort, and speak out to someone. For a moment I was shocked, for disloyalty is terrible, and I felt that Swami himself, not his disciple nor another, was the right person to hear your criticism, but at the same time my whole heart went and goes out to you for the dull terrible misery that oppresses you, and cuts you off from your old life. But I will tell you how the matter strikes an outsider. I put your difficulty as a question in its extreme form, to my mother, and asked her how the things that I supposed trouble the disciple had struck her. You know, of course, that Swami has appealed to her only on his own merits, having the whole current of her [Christian] orthodoxy, and his effect on my own life, against him.

She said at once that not only did sick men require sick men's comforts, but that in the case of Swami himself there must be perfect freedom. She said that so great a man would show that greatness in every way, and would take as his own that which to smaller persons might seem enviable. As to other Monks, she understood that the charge made was against their religious fervour. She was not in the habit of judging for others how this should be shown. She thought it would be unreasonable to expect men in a foreign country to adjust their lives all at once to strange conditions, and personally she would be astonished at anyone who would presume to question the asceticism of Swami T [uriyananda], who appeared to her and the whole family, to be simply overflowing with what they call "The love of God", and to be absolutely indifferent to external circumstances. I give you this as it stands, for my one object was to do justice to the charge, and listen to the reply that rose naturally to the lips of the lady. Had my mother said "I think there may be something in it", I should have tried to report the observation faithfully.

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

Now I am willing to discuss the matter from the inside point of view, and that very plainly. You will remember that in India the word "Sannyasa" applies specially to one sort of asceticism, that is, to purity. Now I will ask you "Have you ever found this asceticism to be untrue?" I have found that such as he is in this respect such are, in their degree, all his Gurubhais and all his monastic disciples. I know many of them very intimately, as you are aware, and most of them a little, and of all this is true.

Another thing, in speaking of him in connection with this question of renunciation, do not forget that you are speaking of a man who might be worshipped today from one end of India to the other, and he will not; of a man who fled from fame year after year; of a man who snaps his fingers at all the rich people of his own city today to their infinite chagrin, and insists on living the life of his humblest fellow-countrymen, though his knowledge and appreciation of the luxuries of Western luxury is not only greater than that of rich Hindus, but far surpassing my own and yours. Could you do these things? It is just that, this Renunciation is positive, active, overwhelming!

If I, standing up a little with a yard measure or a foot rule, declare that the great roar of the ocean beyond is nothing, since it sweeps on past the headlands, and does not invade my little domain to be measured by my little stick, I think I shall have nothing but my own folly for my pains. But I hold no belief in the matter, I do not know your grounds of criticism, and I fail to see the importance of the thing. The life of the disciples of Sri Ram Krishna in their own country has not struck me, so far as I have seen it, as it has done you. I have thought it anything but self-indulgent, but after all, that is a matter of opinion; I don't see that anything depends on it.

One thing, however, I do know, Swamiji is the one person to whom these things should be said. There is no need to ponder how to make them known. Do believe for

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

one moment in the greatness of the man, and trust all your criticisms, all your reproaches to him himself.

Believe me always,
Yours faithfully², N.

Mr. Sturdy had not sought all this warmth. He had not asked for Nivedita's opinion or advice; most certainly he had not solicited her compassion, and perhaps he cannot be blamed for replying in icicle terms. There is no question, however, that some of his coldness arose from the strong dislike that he, and others, had taken to her. Jealousy may have been one contributing factor; another may have been her recent identification with India (an attitude that she herself had come to only after much pounding from Swamiji and many tears). It was one thing to listen to a Hindu monk in a West End drawing room and to discuss Vedanta at the Sesame Club; it was quite another thing to call that Hindu "Master," to lay one's life fully at his feet, to become a Hindu oneself, even to one's name. "The Seviars are the *only* English people who do not hate the *natives*, Sturdy not excepted," Swamiji had warned Nivedita long before.³ In July of 1899, Mrs. Ashton Jonson—one of Swamiji's friends who was out of town that summer—wrote with considerable candor to Miss MacLeod: "I fear Nivedita will not get much support in England for her India work. There are too few persons who know her sufficiently to believe in her personally & still fewer who care enough about Hindoo women to give them the benefit of such education as Miss Noble wd give."⁴ Yet it had seemed axiomatic to Nivedita that her enthusiasms and convictions would be universally shared—particularly by those who loved, or who she thought loved, Swamiji. In the West she was to receive more than one shock in this respect. Perhaps the first was Sturdy's blood-chilling rebuff. It read in full:

I have neither the intention nor the inclination to enter into a long paper discussion, or in words, as to

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

Vivekananda's or any or all of the other Swamis' characters.

I may merely add this, "everyone must form his own ideal, and work with those who conform to it; with those who do not, association will naturally [not] be so close. I have formed my own idea of the life of Renunciation, and although I am not able to lead it myself, I still hope to see others who profess Sannyasa who may approximate to it.

It is only because you seem to think I shared your un-reasoning enthusiasm that I wrote you. It may be quite right for you, but I alone must decide upon the attitude I take, and the opinions on which that attitude is based. I have found that appeals to loyalty are generally appeals to fanaticism, at the same time spoiling and making tyrants of those who by more discerning methods would have acted differently. I have not set up any Gods for myself, and have none to throw down. If you have set up a God or Gods, it is quite right that you should be loyal. My loyalty is to my ideal; if shifting personalities do not conform to it, where is the loyalty? To them, with whose methods I do not agree, or, to the ideal, which perhaps wrongly, I thought we held in common?

I have let you know that on some points there is difference between Swami and me. It now remains for him and me to settle this, not you and me.⁵

On August 24 Nivedita forwarded the first part of the correspondence between herself and Mr. Sturdy to Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Bull, who were then in America. "It takes all your lovely letters—which mercifully came in the same post—to counteract the effect of my enclosures," she wrote. "You will read them & keep them in the archives." Sturdy's criticism that Swamiji and his brother sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Order were not ascetic enough had troubled her. She felt it required an overall answer. "Will you both honestly

think out this difficulty of Mr. Sturdy's," she continued, "and see what permanent meeting of it there shd be. . . . It may be that on thinking the matter over you may decide to approach Swami on the point with a direct question as to the meaning of his general policy—or it may be that you will think it best just to look out for the hints that he drops unconsciously." She went on to search about in her own mind for possible means of justifying to the West the ways of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples:

For instance,—one answer, wh I believe to be his [Swamiji's] conscious policy, wd be that he wished his monks to grow up in certain associations—so that they cd renounce with the ease of him who has possessed. . . . Or another possible answer wd be that the element of a Monastic Rule was only being brought into Eastern Monasticism by him—that until his work was done we cd not take the specimens produced as representative of his will. For himself—it is surely enough to claim that he is free—the Jivan Mukti [jivanmukta] & may do what he chooses. But it *may* occur to him that this question of representing Eastern Asceticism justly in the West is worth facing—& he may decide to impose restrictions tending in that direction on all or some of us.

Another possible reply on his part to these objections wd be that he really wished to create an advance on the present standard of comfort in Bengal—& thought this the way to do it. This point of view wd be easy to preach if he holds it. And personally anything is justified to me that forces narrow hearts to open wider.⁶

The simple fact that seems to have escaped Nivedita and others in those early days was that many of Swamiji's brother disciples were themselves *jivanmuktas* (liberated, though embodied). They *were* free and realized souls, totally selfless, with no further need to *practice* asceticism or anything else. As they proved again and again, before, during, and after this period,

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

they were capable when necessary of the most severe and sustained austerity and self-sacrifice, such as Mr. Sturdy could not even dream of but which was as natural to them as breathing. As for Swamiji's policy, a life of chastity, poverty, and obedience—a life dedicated wholly to the service of man and the realization of God—was, of course, the rule of the Ramakrishna Order. There were, it is true, no spikes at the Math to sleep upon, but there were no soft mattresses either. And at the time of Mr. Sturdy's complaints there was so little money for the maintenance of the Math that Swamiji was desperate.

When Nivedita's letter with its enclosures reached Ridgely Manor, Swamiji had already arrived. Never one to beat about the bush, Miss MacLeod did not approach him cautiously, nor did she wait for him to drop hints; she simply showed him the correspondence between Nivedita and Sturdy. She then forwarded Nivedita's letter to Mrs. Bull, to whom it was also addressed and whose arrival at Ridgely Manor had been delayed. "Read Margot's letter to *no* one," she wrote, "—nor refer to Sturdy—nor write him. I'll tell you much."⁷

The next day Swamiji wrote from Ridgely Manor to Mrs. Bull at Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she was taking care of her sick daughter, Olea Vaughan: "It is an awful spell of the bad turn of fortune with me last six months. Misfortune follows me ever wherever I go. In England, Sturdy seems to have got disgusted with the work; he does not see an asceticism in us from India. Here no sooner I reach than Olea gets a bad attack. Shall I run up to you?" he added. "I know I cannot be of much help, but I will try my best in being useful."⁸

It was ten days before Swamiji felt inclined to write to Sturdy. Some parts of his letter of September 14 have appeared in the *Complete Works*. But the full correspondence between Swamiji and Sturdy during this fall of 1899 has not been published. Somehow, typed copies of most of the letters found their way in later years to the Ramakrishna Monastery in Bangalore, South India, from where they were made available to me through the kindness of the late Swami Yatiswarananda, who at the

time was vice-president of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Thus I am able to add here some more details of this episode, which has been only half known and the important part of which—how much Swamiji forgave his disciple—has not been heretofore known at all. The correspondence will take us into November of 1899, months beyond the point we have come to in our story; but since it had little connection with the events that were taking place during its course but pertained, rather, to Swamiji's life and work in England, let us plunge here into the whole incredible exchange.

The unpublished portions (together with a published passage or two) of Swamiji's first letter to Sturdy from America (written from Ridgely Manor and dated September 14, 1899) read as follows:

I have been simply taking rest at the Leggetts' and doing nothing. Abhedananda is here—he has been working hard....

Well, I was given some correspondence between you and Miss Noble to read the other day—I am sorry we could not come up to your ideal. But my experience of life is we so rarely find a person who comes up to that. Then again it is almost impossible for anyone to keep steady on the plane we assign to him in the ideal. We are so human, and liable to change for good or worse. At the same time like the earth's rotating we are always leaving the changes in us out of calculation, and attribute it all to the external ideals.

Mrs. Johnson [Mrs. Ashton Jonson]—is of opinion, no spiritual person ought to be ill—it also seems to her now that my smoking is sinful &c.&c.

That was Miss Muller's reason for leaving me, my illness. They may be perfectly right, for aught I know, and you too, but I am what I am. In India the same defects, plus eating with Europeans have been taken exception to by many. I was driven out of a private temple by the

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

owner for eating with Europeans. I wish I was malleable enough to be moulded into whatever one desired but unfortunately I never saw a man who could satisfy everyone. Nor can anyone who has to go to different places—possibly satisfy all. . . . I hear also that there has been some talk about the money you gave me. I got £500=7500 Rs. +£500=7500 Rs. from Miss Soutter. Miss Muller gave through Goodwin 30,000 Rs. total 45,000 Rs. Miss Muller got us to buy a piece of land which cost 40,000 Rs.—and about 4,000 to level it and fill up the huge gaps in it, as it was a dockyard. I have a building on it—not large—and a chapel and library &c. That has been paid for by the Indian friends—and Mrs. Bull of America. The land alone with the improvements will cover more than the sum I got from my English friends. An inquiry in the Registrar's records of the Howrah Dist. Bengal will show the truth of what I state nor have I even spent a penny of the money given to me by anyone in any country for my work on myself. For my own private expenses I in America used to get money by lecturing or writing in the papers. In India Mrs. Sevier and the Rajah of Khetri used to give me little sums to cover it. Whenever you think it necessary the accounts of every penny the Eng. people gave me is ready. Miss Noble's school was started with funds I got in India from the Maharajah of Kashmir and my Madras publications and her own money largely. Mrs. Johnson thinks the attitude of Miss Noble towards me is very unsatisfactory—and I am responsible for that. I do not know how I can be responsible for ideas another person has of me of which I am not even cognisant of!!! How could I know your or Mrs. Johnson's present mental attitude towards me if you did not through the American friends let me know of it? I am told there has been some discussion about some funds between you and Miss Noble—am I to be responsible for that too? Did I write to you to give me

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

any money? I don't remember myself asking for pecuniary help from anybody anywhere. If they helped me of their own accord I took it, when they gave it to me personally—I spent it,—mostly on others; when for the work—it has been spent on the work. I can understand well how differences of opinion tastes and ideals should naturally arise in the course of years—but how so much hatred and dislike may slowly and without any warning expression, gather round little trifling personal peculiarities I cannot understand.

I so long thought it was only the fault of enslaved races like mine,—but that manlier races like yours should also have it, and suddenly bring it to light without any previous warning, makes me sad.

Of course it is my Karma—and I am glad that it is so—for, though it smarts for the time, it is another great experience of life, which will be useful either in this or in the next.

If you or Miss Muller or Miss Soutter repent of the help you gave to my work—only give me time, I will try my best to pay it back...

As for me I stick to my nature and principle—once a friend always a friend, also the true Indian principle of looking subjectively for the cause of the objective.

I am sure that the fault is mine and mine only for every wave of dislike or hatred that I get—it could not be otherwise and thanking you and Mrs. Johnson for this calling me once more to the internal,

I remain as ever with love and blessings,⁹

Vivekananda

Emboldened, Sturdy replied to Swamiji on October 1. His letter (the curious punctuation of which is not necessarily

his own, for I quote from a typed copy) read in full:

25, Holland Villas Rd. W.
Oct. 1st, 1899.

My dear Swāmiji

I have duly received your letter of Sep. 14th, and thank you for it.

Before I make any further remark, I would like to say that there is no combination of people, with grievances against you here. Miss Soutter, as you know, has had no communication with me for a very long time.

Mrs. Ashton-Jonson, she knows but slightly, and never meets, Miss Müller neither these two ladies nor I have anything to do with whatever.

Between Mrs. Ashton-Jonson, and myself, there has been some small correspondence during the last 2½ months I have been absent, not about you at all, but what Mrs. A. J., thought of Miss Noble. Now you must understand that I have no comment to make on Miss N's attitude to you. It is a personal thing, between you two, and there it ends. That is my idea of the freedom of the individual, both for you two, and for me.

But Miss. N. was writing to me assuming all the time, that I held the same attitude of worship, saw you in the same mind-formed shape, that she sees you in. It was necessary therefor, that I should write her, and not act the the part of a hypocrite. I also told her to show the letters to you, which she at first declined to do.

Now I have nothing to take back from those letters. Miss Noble was writing of *Sannyasins* and *Sannyasa*. I wrote you [her?] just what I have continued to think, for a long time, from very shortly, after the Caversham days, that I have *heard*, a great deal of *Sannyasa*, in this country, and and seen very little of it from those who professed it. I do not want to enlarge on this subject, and thus embitter the question, but to justify what I have said, I will remark that

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

there has always been grumbling at food and accommodation, and that the expense of supporting the so-called *Sannyasins*, has been very much more than would have supported many a hardworking curate, or young University man, or even doctor in our great poverty-stricken centres, who make no pretensions to *Sannyasa*. But who fulfil their ideals of it without talk, as to other points, your anger about trivial things, a certain amount of boasting and exaggeration, etc. let them pass. I only want to say that I do not profess, or pretend to see perfection, but let us have done with humbug, and sham, and call you, and know you, as you are, that is, like ourselves, with failings equivalent to our own, with more genius, and more insight, doubtless, but not a God walking the earth—at least not for me, whatever some certain devoted ladies may see. If you want to know whether Miss Soutter, or Miss Müller, repent of their gifts to you, you must write them, I know nothing of them, I will answer for myself, I am glad to hear, now, from you, for the first time, that it has been wisely expended. I do not regret one anna of the gift, I hope every brick it may have helped to raise, or *Sannyasi*, to help may be surrounded with blessing. I do not know that any suggestion has been made by anybody, that their gift was regretted. You talk of hatred, that is an exaggeration or worse. Nobody here that I have anything to do with, comes anywhere in the direction of hatred, or even dislike, honest expression of difference of ideal or opinion, is not hatred. I see no truth in your remarks about enslaved, and manlier races, there is no cabal here, no conspiracy, I have no bloodthirsty confederates. Nobody is hiding any hatred, that I know. I can certainly speak for Mrs. Jonson on that score. She has strong Xtrian science beliefs, and so is perhaps rather hard on you just there. I know how weak all round we become in illness. I am no judge of how far you or anybody else is ill, by the action of the mind as it were considered apart from disorganized

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

body. I know what you have taught about body, I know also that the, "do as I say, not as I do", of our parsons or of anybody else, has little result. Is mostly a waste of time, stimulates people greatly like champagne for a little and leaves them more depressed, because less believing than before, when they discover the difference, between impassioned oratory, and practice. Think of all the parsons, of all the sects, *talking* every week, and think of one man, acting instead, What influence, do all the former really have? It all comes to this, Here I am, prepared for work, of any kind, that leads to the worthy setting forth, of the Indian Ideals, and the living up to them. But I am particular and perhaps overnice, as to whom I enter into unconditional co-operation with if they teach in one direction, and their lives do not follow it. If after encouraging *Sannyasins*, to come here, they have no *Sannyasa*, neither contentment, equanimity, simplicity of surroundings, or anything else, if they want food, from the other side of the world to live on, shilling cigars to smoke, and the best of fruits, clothes, or what not, what are they? What is it, they are teaching! I don't understand it. I can only say they are not the ideals of *Sannyasa*, I have formed in my mind, by reading the Gita, the *Upanishads*, the *Mahabharata*, and other books, dealing with a glorious, manly noble Indian past, when there was grit, energy, fire, and great austerity, and command, accompanied by love and gentleness, all in one.

Perhaps they always lived with the wealthy of their period, and had a good time all round, but I don't think so. They more likely helped the poor and the struggling, and outfaced their poverty by needing less than they. I have to live with wife, children, household, and all the complication of the civilisation, into which I am born, I did not take the opportunity that I had when it offered, some years ago, and towards which I had been struggling, for years before. Well, that is over. When I was *acting* then,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

I might *teach* what I was acting, I cannot teach poverty, simplicity, the non-holding on to possessions, when I have to possess for wife and children, and provide a household. But I can help others, who *live* it to teach it, without hypocrisy. But the question is, can I find anybody? Is anybody in such a world, prepared to *act* or only to *talk*, along with the rest of the babbling crew? I want no travesties.

I will rather remain silent for ever, and wait for the ages to roll back. I can with difficulty bring myself, to utter any sentiment, or ideal, that I am not embodying, in my character. I do not want to criticise anybody else, for whatever they may do, up to rape or murder, but I want the speech to be the man in myself, and if I work with others, in them too. I am not satisfied with twoness in myself, I cannot preach to people, things that I am not, expressing in my life, or I would start tomorrow. My life expresses what I am, and that is my preaching. You and your brethren are *Sannyasins*, you say, Well, *be* so. What you teach let us all see carried out. I may not be able to express very clearly what I would but I have nothing to hide, or to keep back, and if you think there is anything further to say or to clear up, let us have it. I should like all at Ridgeley, including Mr. Leggett, to see this letter, or else to keep it entirely to yourself, as I have here.

Yours as before,¹⁰

E.T.S.

Swamiji replied softly, obviously wanting to bring a close to this impossible correspondence and bid his disciple Godspeed. His letter bears no date but was written in October from Ridgely Manor. Although it has been published in the *Complete Works*, I shall give it here in full:

My dear Sturdy,

Your last letter reached me after knocking about a little through insufficient address.

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

It is quite probable that very much of your criticism is just and correct. It is also possible that some day you may find that all this springs from your dislike of certain persons, and I was the scapegoat.

There need be no bitterness, however, on that account, as I don't think I ever posed for anything but what I am. Nor is it ever possible for me to do so, as an hour's contact is enough to make everybody see through my smoking, bad temper, etc. "Every meeting must have a separation"—this is the nature of things. I carry no feeling of disappointment even. I hope you will have no bitterness. It is Karma that brings us together and Karma—separates.

I know how shy you are, and how loath to wound others' feelings. I perfectly understand months of torture in your mind, when you have been struggling to work with people who were so different from your ideal. I could not guess it before at all, else I could have saved you a good deal of unnecessary mental trouble. It is *Karma* again.

The accounts were not submitted before, as the work is not yet finished; and I thought of submitting to my donor a complete account when the whole thing was finished. The work was begun only last year, as we had to wait for funds a long time and my method is never to ask but wait for voluntary help.

I follow the same idea in all my work, as I am so conscious of my nature being positively displeasing to many, and wait till somebody wants me. I hold myself ready also to depart at a moment's notice. In the matter of departure thus, I never feel bad about it or think much of it, as in the constant roving life I lead I am constantly doing it. Only so sorry I trouble others, without wishing it. Will you kindly send over if there is any mail for me at your address?

May all blessings attend you and yours for ever and ever will be the constant prayer of¹¹

Vivekananda.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Sturdy would not let the matter rest there. As though compelled by some demonic spirit, he had to answer Swamiji with further insult and abuse. "Oh the terrible results when the sons of God marry the daughters of men!" Sister Nivedita had written earlier to Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Bull in connection with Sturdy's change of attitude.¹² Indeed the man, one thinks, was mad. The following letter was dated November 3:

My dear Swamiji:

I can only protest that no dislike to any person or persons exists in my mind whatever and I have been puzzled to think who you could have had in your mind when you suggested you had been made a scapegoat for them.

I have not the slightest bitterness; you have absolute freedom to carry on your message to the western world in your own way. There is also perfect freedom for everybody else and they will work or refrain according to the impressions they gain. But it is to be presumed that you wish to appear in a consistent light and not to test the intuitions of those who listen to you to such an extent that having to judge by what they see they desire to hear you no more.

I have constantly had to defend you against the criticisms of even good friends of your cause on account of the things I have written previously and have had to stretch my own convictions and do a considerable amount of "special pleading" for you. Poor Goodwin knew this well and his opinion coincided with mine.

[In justice to Mr. Goodwin, it should be noted here that in the spring of 1896, just before voyaging to London to be with Swamiji, he wrote in a letter to Miss MacLeod: "Shall I shock you very much if I tell you that the Swami takes the place of Christ to me? I think not, for you will understand what I mean."]¹³

Nobody knows better than I [Mr. Sturdy went on] how your prospects here, whatever may be the case elsewhere,

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

have suffered through your own acts. Rather than believe this you prefer to think that my individual prejudice is at the base of it all. You seem never to have perceived that with Western people, altho' they may seek "great display and luxury" for themselves that they have high regard for simplicity and natural austerity and denial in others, especially in those who teach it and that whilst they are pressing hospitality and luxury upon you they are inwardly regretting the absence of indifference to it.

I shall write no more on this subject. Independence is a fine thing and so is consistency between speech and act. If you want people to look at a grand painting you do not point at it with one hand and throw lime in their eyes with the other. If you desire to make a gift you do not creep up like a thief and so risk blows instead of thanks. If you come as a sannyasi to teach people absence of attachment to the world and at the same time maintain the appearance of having a jolly good time in luxury and comfort even if you *were* free of these things, what good are you likely to do?

Yours as ever,¹⁴

E. T. Sturdy

There was a limit to the insolence Swamiji would permit. In his letter before this last Sturdy had written: "If you think there is anything further to say or to clear up, let us have it." Swamiji now let him have it. His reply, which was written from New York in November and first published in the 1958 edition of volume seven of the *Complete Works*, is given below in full and as it appears in an early typed copy:

21 West Thirty Fourth Street

My dear Sturdy—This is not to defend my conduct. Words can not wipe off the evils I have done—nor any censor stop from work the good deeds if any.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

For the last few months I have been hearing so much of the luxuries I was given to enjoy by the people of the West; luxuries which the hypocrite myself has been enjoying although preaching renunciation all the while, luxuries—the enjoyment of which has been the great stumbling block in my way, in England, at least. I nearly hypnotized myself into the belief that there at least has been a little oasis in the dreary desert of my life—a little spot of light in one whole life of misery and gloom—one moment of relaxation in a life of hard work and harder curses—even that oasis, that spot, that moment was only one of sense enjoyment.

I was glad—I blessed a hundred times a day those that helped me to get it—when lo! your last letter comes like a thunderclap and the dream is vanished. I begin to disbelieve your criticisms—have little faith left in all this talk of *luxuries* and enjoyments and other visions memory calls up—these I state; hope you will send it round to friends if you think fit and correct me where I am wrong.

(1) I remember your place at Reading—where I was fed with boiled cabbage and potatoes and boiled rice and boiled lentils—three times a day—with your wife's curses for sauce all the time. I do not remember your giving me any cigar to smoke—shilling or penny ones. Nor do I remember myself as complaining of either the food or your wife's incessant curses, though I *lived as a thief* shaking through fear all the time, and working every day for you.

The next memory is of the house at St. George's road—you and Miss Muller at the head. My poor brother was ill there and Miss Muller drove him away. There too I don't remember to have had any luxuries—as to food or drink or bed or even *the room given to me*.

The next was Miss Muller's place—though she has been very kind to me, I was living on nuts and fruits. The next is that of the black-hole of London [14 Greycoat Gardens] where I had to work almost day and night

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

and cook the meals oft times for 5 or 6—and most nights with a bite of bread and butter.

I remember Mrs. Johnson giving me a dinner and a night's lodging in her place—and then the next day criticising the black savage—so dirty and smoking all over the house.

With the exception of Cap and Mrs Seviars—I do not remember even one piece of rag as big as a handkerchief I got from England. On the other hand the incessant demand on my body and mind in England—is the cause of my break down in health. This was all you English people gave me, whilst working me to my death—and now I am cursed for the luxuries I lived in!!!!!! Whosoever of you have given me a coat? whosoever a cigar? whosoever a bit of fish or flesh? Whosoever of you dare say— I asked food or drink or smoke or dress or money from you? Ask Sturdy, ask for God's sake, ask your friends, and first ask your own "God within who never sleeps."

You have given me money for my work, every penny of it is there. Before your eyes—I sent my brother away perhaps to his death, and I would not give him a farthing of the money which was not my private property.

On the other hand I remember in England Cap. and Mrs. Seviars—who have clad me when I was cold, nursed me better than my own mother would have, borne with me in my weaknesses, my trials—and they have nothing but blessings for me. And Sturdy that Mrs. Seviars—because she did not care for honor—has the worship of thousands today and when she is dead millions will remember her as one of the great benefactresses of the poor Indians. And they never cursed me for my luxuries—though they are ready to give me luxuries if I need or wish.

I need not tell you of Mrs. Bull, Miss M'cLeod, Mr. and Mrs. Leggett. You know their love and kindness for me—and Mrs. Bull and Miss M'cLeod have been to our country, moved and lived with us as no foreigner

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

ever did—roughing it all—and they do not ever curse me and my luxuries either—they will be only too glad to have me eat well and smoke dollar cigars if I wish. And these Leggetts and Bulls were the people whose bread I was eating, whose clothes were covering my back, whose money bought my smokes and several times paid my rent, whilst I was killing myself for your people, when you were taking *my pound of flesh* for the dirty hole and starvation and reserving all this accusation of luxury.

‘ The clouds of autumn make great noise
but send no rain;

The clouds of the rainy season—without
a word flood the earth.”

See—Sturdy, those that have helped or are still helping—they have no criticism, no curses: it is only those who do nothing, only come to grind their own axes, they curse, they criticise. That such worthless, heartless selfish rubbish criticise is the greatest blessing that can come to me. I want nothing so much in life as to be miles off from these extremely selfish axegrinders.

Talk of luxuries—take these critics up one after the other—it is all flesh, all flesh and no spirit anywhere. Thank God—they come out sooner or later in their true lights. And you advise me to regulate my conduct—my work—according to the desires of such heartless, selfish persons, and are at your wits’ end because I do not.

As to my gurubhais—they do nothing but what I insist on their doing—if they have shown any selfishness anywhere—that is my ordering them, not what they would do themselves.

Would you like your children put into that dark hole you got for me in London—made to work to death and almost starved all the time? Would Mrs. Sturdy like that? They are *sannyasis*—and that means no *sannyasin* should unnecessarily throw away his life or *undertake unnecessary hardship*.

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

In undergoing all this *hardship* [thrice underscored] in the West we have been only breaking the rules of *Sannyasa*. They are my brothers, my children—I do not want them to die in holes for my sake—I don't—by all that is good and true I don't want them starved and worked and cursed for all their pains.

A word more. I will be very glad if you can point out to me, where have I preached torturing the flesh. As for the *Sastras*—I shall be only too glad if a *sastri* dares oppose us with the rules of life laid down for sannyasins and Paramahamsas.

Well Sturdy—my heart aches. I understand it all. I know what you are in—you are in the clutches of people who want to use you. I don't mean your wife. She is too simple to be dangerous—but my poor boy—you have got the flesh smell—little money—and vultures are around. Such is life.

You said a lot about ancient India—that India still lives in some, Sturdy, not dead—and that living India dares even today to deliver her message without fear or favor of the rich—without fear of anybody's opinion, either in the land where her feet are in chains or in the very face of those who hold the end of the chain, her rulers. That India still lives, Sturdy. India of undying love—of everlasting faithfulness—the unchangeable, not only in manners and customs, but also in love, in faith, in friendship. And I, the least of that India's child, love you Sturdy with *Indian* love and would any day give up a thousand bodies to help you out of this delusion.

Ever yours¹⁵
Vivekananda

It would appear that even this did not silence Mr. Sturdy. His retort, as far as I know, is not extant, but that it was written in the same pompous and abusive vein as his previous letters can be gathered from the fact that Swamiji did not

reply to it at all. Over a year later, after he had returned to India, he wrote to Sturdy in regard to a business matter. "I learn from Saradananda," he said in part, "that you have sent over Rs. 1,529-5-5 to the Math, being the money that was in hand for work in England. I am sure it will be rightly used.... I wrote you a letter from Paris. I am afraid you did not get it. So sorry to learn the passing away of Mrs. Sturdy. She has been a very good wife and good mother, and it is not ordinarily one meets with such in this life. [Lucie Sturdy had died in the late autumn of 1900. Swamiji's letter from Paris had no doubt been one of condolence.]... It is not because of your free expression of opinion in your last letter to me that I stopped writing," he concluded. "I only let the wave pass, as is my wont. Letters would only have made a wave of a little bubble."¹⁶

Whether or not Sturdy had the grace to reply to this is not on record; but one way or the other, Swamiji would have loved him still. His heart could never be host to the slightest rancor, rejecting it even as the body rejects a foreign substance. In January of 1901 he had written to Mrs. Bull, "Kindly convey my undying love to Miss Muller the next time you see her, so to Sturdy."¹⁷

Curiously, for Swamiji had most probably shown them Sturdy's letters, Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod had remained friendly with that self-deceived man, as their subsequent correspondence with him testifies. Sister Nivedita had not been so forgiving. Although in her book *The Master As I Saw Him* she does not even hint at the shameful treatment Swamiji was accorded by some of her countrymen, her reticence did not spring from a desire to spare them; on the contrary, even to mention their names in connection with her great Master would have been, it seemed to her, to honor them too well. In 1906, while her book was in progress, she wrote in a letter to Miss MacLeod:

I am trusting, trusting, trusting that He will guide my

ENGLAND: AN INTERLUDE

hand line by line, that I might write down more aspects of Him that are eternal, and be able to discard remorselessly all the rest. But you do not know how much I learn, in doing this. All the people who hurt Him—in a kind of way I find that I have to forgive them. I find that to pillory them as they so richly deserve, and as I now have the means of doing, would be perhaps only to flaw His beauty and to immortalise them, by placing them at His side. And so I have to throw away many and many a stone that I've kept in my pocket this many a year!!¹⁸

Surely Sister Nivedita was right in presenting Swamiji's greatness in its pure essence, right not to clutter her beautiful book with ugly detail. Yet a time comes when all the details, both shining and shadow-ridden, of the drama of Swami Vivekananda's life should be known, for without such knowledge the greatness of that drama cannot be fully grasped. Swamiji's beauty and magnificence did not lie in his teachings alone; they lay of course also in his character, and they shone through the small incidents of his life as well as through the dazzling and important events. He was a human being, a man who loved deeply and who could be as deeply hurt, but he was a man who could forgive without reservation the most painful of blows. Though he had the divine power a thousand times over to blast to fragments those who ill-used him, he had the divine compassion never to do so, but to bless them instead. The Sturdy episode was but one example of his forbearance. There were many other such incidents. He seldom, if ever, mentioned them; his acts of forgiveness, his blessings, were always simple, as natural, as unstudied as a smile or a wave of the hand. Only as old letters come to light do we learn of the faithless, sometimes treacherous, disciples and friends who bestrewed his path and of the onrushing of his love that swept over them as over pebbles, carrying them along to the sea.

CHAPTER THREE

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

1

"Swamiji is starting today *Allen Line* [Allan State Line]. *Numidian*. from *Glasgow*. a telegram just received says!" Thus Josephine MacLeod wrote to Mrs. Bull on August 17, 1899. Her letter, full of heavy underscorings, continued:

Do what you choose. Come at any hour—you are *always* welcome.

You better meet me in New York & we will go *together* to meet our *Prophet*. He ought to be 10 days en route—but I will write you *definitely* tomorrow the day the ship is expected & you meet me in town.

Do not tell Mrs Crossley a *word*. let her stay in Princeton so we can have our Prophet without *one* thorn or criticism—in all his *holiness*.

I think I may keep Miss Stumm over—she has her worth.

I am in *Heaven*.¹

Lovingly Jojo.

(Mrs. Crossley was a London friend of Mrs. Bull's who had crossed the Atlantic with her in June. She was not well and not, it would seem, in full accord with Swamiji's views. The more fortunate Maud Stumm was an artist in her late twenties who had met Swamiji once or twice during his first visit to the West and who evidently had admired him. She was now visiting Ridgely Manor.)

Five days later, Miss MacLeod again wrote to "Saint Sara," telling her, with more underscorings, the exact date of Swamiji's arrival in New York:

Swamiji's boat the *Numidian* sailed on Aug 17th & is

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

due in New York on *Monday August 28th* [double underscore] so a letter just announced. So *you* take the midnight train on *Sunday*, arriving at 6.—go directly to 21 [21 East Thirty-fourth Street, the Leggetts' town house]—where a telegram is to be sent me announcing the day & hour of arrival.

Betty [Leggett] goes to East Hampton on Friday & will meet you in New York on *Monday*, and I also will be in town that day by noon.

Our Prophet again with us!

I have invited Mrs Coulston to go to 21 & to come up here for 3 days visit—not one uncongenial element!

God is kind

If *quite* convenient you might bring up a trunk of blankets—in case 18 single ones aren't enough—*besides* 10 eider down quilts.

What do you think?

I can easily bring a few pairs from our town house & this will be less complicated so do not worry or trouble about it.

I *am* so thankful to know you are coming to us *alone*.²

The word *alone* was underscored five or six times, as though to ward off the uncongenial element. But as things happened, Miss MacLeod's whole exuberant plan for her friend miscarried. Just at that time Olea, spending a week or so at a camp in one of the New England states, had become ill. She had returned to her mother's home in Cambridge, where Mrs. Bull could not, or would not, leave her, and thus almost six weeks were to pass before they arrived at Ridgely Manor. Even Miss MacLeod's own long-dreamed-of plan to meet Swamiji's ship, to see him walking with his wonderfully majestic stride down the gangplank, his face breaking into radiance at the sight of his old friends, was not fulfilled, for the *Numidian* steamed into the New York harbor two or three

hours earlier than scheduled. Fortunately, three people were at the dock to meet Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda—Maud Stumm, who had come down from Ridgely Manor, Mrs. Coulston, a prominent member of the New York Vedanta Society (Swami Abhedananda was out of town), and a Mr. Sydney Clarke, to whom Miss Stumm had telegraphed, asking him to be present to take care of the Swamis' baggage.

He was "tired and ill-looking," Miss Stumm wrote later of Swamiji's arrival. "He was carrying most carefully a big bottle wrapped in papers that were torn and ragged; this precious bottle, which he refused to relinquish before reaching Binnewater, contained a wonderful kind of sauce like curry; brought thus by hand from India. 'For Jo!' he said."³

Miss Stumm mentions that "the party from Ridgely" (presumably Miss MacLeod and the Leggetts) did not arrive until ten o'clock that morning, "and so disappointed!" "We all went back [to Ridgely Manor] together," she wrote, but whether "all" included Sister Christine and Mrs. Funke, one does not know.⁴ It is certain, however, that Swamiji spent almost no time in the hot, humid city, but was whisked away with all speed.

The train trip from New York to Ridgely Manor, or, more precisely, from Weekawken, New Jersey, to Kingston in Ulster County, New York, eighty miles or so up the Hudson, was a lovely ride. On the right lay the broad, deep river, straight almost as a canal, with its traffic of ships and ferries and its lighthouses in midstream, like Victorian dwellings set adrift; on one's left rose the tall Hudson Highlands pressing close at first to the water's edge, later on flattening out into the wide river valley with its farms and pastures, its orchards, its green, sun-splashed woods, its little towns, and its distant mountains. At Kingston, an important river port, one boarded another train for Binnewater, a tiny station some seven miles west. Here the party was no doubt met by a surrey and spanking pair and driven the four miles to Ridgely Manor along a gently rolling country road, past apple orchards, corn and

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

pumpkin fields, wooded hills, and occasional farm buildings. Most of these last were of the nineteenth century—neat red barns and white houses scalloped along the eaves with wooden rickrack called Hudson River Bracketed; but here and there a small weathered stone house, dating back to pre-Revolutionary days, stood half hidden among protective elms and chestnuts. Half a mile beyond Stone Ridge, the small village through which the road passed, the horses turned into the avenue of Ridgely and trotted up to the Manor—a graceful and welcoming house said to have been designed by a pupil of the famous architect Stanford White and as dignified, substantial, and unassuming as its owner, Francis Leggett.

The property that Mr. Leggett had acquired in Ulster County some eight years earlier, three years before he dreamed he would be bringing Betty MacLeod Sturges there as his bride, had consisted of several small farms, so that the estate, when it became all of a piece, included within its fifty acres a number of buildings. These were the "Big Cottage," also known as "Clematis Hall"—a name more becoming to its size and dignity; the "Little Cottage," itself something more than a cottage; and the "Inn," which had been a select boarding house run by two maiden ladies. In a position more or less central to these three houses, Francis Leggett had built the Manor, an imposing mansion of clapboard siding, tall-columned porticos and loggia, hip and saddle roofs, and massive chimneys, its architecture reminiscent, on the whole, of the gracious mansions of the old South. In addition, Mr. Leggett had built several small farm buildings, a stable and carriage house, and, for the entertainment of his guests, a large playhouse known as the "Casino." This last was equipped even to bowling alleys, and was adjoined by a tennis court.⁵ Between the various and widely scattered houses lay some ten acres of sweeping lawns, cool to the eye but in 1899 largely unshaded, for the trees planted by Francis Leggett were still small. Only two old chestnuts, huge and spreading, and an enormous maple (which still stands) gave relief in the hot summer afternoons.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Around the house were shrubs of all sorts, but these, too, had been selected by Mr. Leggett and were not yet luxuriant. Indeed the house and grounds still had the bare look of newness, but by the same token one had an unobstructed view of fields and wooded hills and, beyond to the west and north, some twelve to twenty miles distant, of the blue Catskills and, to the south, much closer and clearer, of the Shawangunks. The height of neither of these ranges (Mohonk, the tallest peak of the Shawangunks, rose 1542 feet above sea level) would have impressed Swamiji, for both—particularly the latter—were geologically ancient, honed down and buffed by millennia of rain and snow into mountains barely higher than foothills of Himalayan foothills. But they were lovely nonetheless, with their soft, many-folded contours that seemed to move with the passing day, changing color and form.

This was not Swamiji's first visit to Ridgely Manor. He had been here twice before: once in April of 1895, when he had taken a short vacation from his New York classes, and again in the Christmas season of the same year, at which time he had been the guest not of Frank Leggett alone but of both Betty and Frank, they having been married in Paris that September. In 1899, the "heavenly pair," as Swamiji called them, were still just that, rhapsodically in love, regretting the days when Frank Leggett's business in New York took him from Ridgely to the city, still cherishing their long weekends together. It was all harmony and joy at Ridgely that summer of 1899—"the great summer," as it came to be called. And a great summer it was, for the group of people that centered around a saint and prophet of the highest magnitude formed a house party such as the world had probably never known before and very likely will not know soon again. Indeed those ten weeks were rare even for Swamiji, for seldom (never before in the West) had he spent so long a time vacationing in one place.

He and Swami Turiyananda were given the "Little Cottage," which stood about a five-minute stroll from the main house—

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

across the generous and open lawns in a northwesterly direction. This "Little Cottage" (afterward always called "Swamiji's Cottage" by Miss MacLeod) contained five small bedrooms on the second floor, all with pitched ceilings. On the ground floor were two small sitting rooms with fireplaces, a sizable dining room, a large kitchen, a small laundry, and a wide front porch. A photograph, supplied by Mrs. Frances Leggett and here reproduced, will give some idea of its size. Almost certainly, Swamiji occupied one of the two front bedrooms and Swami Turiyananda the other. The three back bedrooms were not so comfortable and ran, moreover, one into the other, the far two having no alternate means of access. (In connection with the Swamis' sleeping quarters a charming story was told in later years by Miss MacLeod to Swami Nikhilananda, who passed it on to me. Mrs. Leggett, coming to inspect the accommodations in the cottage, found Swami Turiyananda's mattress and bedding on the floor of his room. "What is the matter, Swami?" she exclaimed. "Is something wrong with the bed?" "No, no," he assured her; "the bed is fine. But, you see, I cannot bring myself to sleep on the same level with Swamiji—so I have put the mattress on the floor.")

The "Big Cottage," which stood farther from the Manor than the "Little Cottage," though in the same direction, was a commodious house with ten bedrooms and a curving driveway of its own. It was to be assigned to Mrs. Bull and 'leah, with a pair of servants to take care of them. But big as the "Big Cottage" may have been, it was dwarfed—in impressiveness, at least—by the Manor, which encompassed several spacious first-floor living rooms, seven second-story bedrooms, and, on its top floor under the roof, quarters for a staff of servants. The Manor accommodated the family—Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett; Josephine MacLeod; Alberta Sturges, Mrs. Leggett's twenty-two-year-old daughter by a former marriage; the baby, not yet three-year-old Frances Leggett, and her nurse—and at one time or another various transient house guests, such as Mrs. Coulston, whom we have already met; Miss Ellen Waldo,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

a close disciple of Swamiji's from New York, who was invited for a day in early October; Mrs. Florence (Milward) Adams, an old friend from Chicago and well-known lecturer on dramatic arts, physical culture, and metaphysics; Miss Florence Guernsey, the daughter of Swamiji's good friend Dr. Egbert Guernsey of New York; and a Dr. Helmer, a practitioner of osteopathy, which science, then coming into vogue, was Miss MacLeod's most recent enthusiasm. Other guests were more or less permanent—Sister Nivedita, for instance, and a Professor Marchand, who had been brought by the Leggetts from France to help the family polish up its French in preparation for the following summer, when everyone, including Swamiji, was to go to Paris for the International Exposition. (An old man, Professor Marchand fell ill during his stay at Ridgely and there died. During his illness, as Mrs. Frances Leggett tells in *Late and Soon*, Miss MacLeod had visited the old man in his room, and he had embraced her and said to her, "This is the house of God!"⁶ And one cannot but think that Ridgely Manor was indeed that summer a veritable Benares in which to die.)

Over the stables in an apartment of some four or five bedrooms lived Hollister Sturges, Alberta's brother (younger than she by two years), and a number of their friends and cousins—all bursting with high spirits. Francis Leggett's nephew, Theodore Whitmarsh, whom he looked upon as a son, his wife, and their three young children occupied the "Inn." Housed in the village of Stone Ridge were Maud Stumm, a Miss de Kubel, and a Mr. Goodby, all three of whom came daily, as Miss MacLeod was to write to Mrs. Bull, "to drink deep."⁷

Other guests no doubt came and went, or, in some cases, stayed on for a week or more. Their names, for the most part, are lost to us; but among those whose visits gave Swamiji particular pleasure were the two McKindley sisters, Isabelle and Harriet, cousins of Mary and Harriet Hale and an inseparable part of that family whom Swamiji loved above all families he had known, East or West. ("By the by, Mary," he was to write in September from Ridgely Manor, "it is curious

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

your family, Mother Church [Mrs. George Hale] and her clergy, both monastic and secular, have made more impression on me than any family I know of. Lord bless you ever and ever.”)⁸ Very probably it was through Swami Abhedananda, who was lecturing at the Greenacre School of Comparative Religions in Maine and to whom Swamiji had sent a telegram,⁹ that the McKindley girls, attending the school, learned of his arrival in America and of his presence at Ridgely Manor. Isabelle, the older sister, wrote to him at the end of August. Swamiji’s reply, not heretofore published, was immediate:

31st August ’99

My dear Isabel—

Many thanks for your kind note I will be so so glad to see you. Miss M’cLeod is going to write you to stop a day and night here on your way to the west.

My love to the holy family in Chicago and hope soon to be able to come west and have great fun.

So you are in Greenacre at last. Is this the first year you have been in? How do you like the place? If you see Miss Farmer [Miss Sarah Farmer, the founder of Greenacre] of course kindly convey her my kindest regards and to all the rest of my friends there

Ever yours affly¹⁰
Vivekananda

Miss MacLeod sent off an invitation to the two girls on the same day. Her letter, interesting, I believe, for its directions and time tables, read:

August 31, 1899

My dear Miss McKinley—

Your letter this morning was a great pleasure to our household.—We should be so pleased if you and your sister will stop over with us a day and night on your way home—If you will let me know the date, I will arrange

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

to have a free place for you and to meet you at the Station *Binnewater*: four miles off. You can take a train at *Boston* for *Kingston*—changing at Albany—and at *Kingston* take a train to *Binnewater*—I think the best train leaving Boston is at 11 P.M. Of course if you are in or near New York—we are very accessible, being 3 hours by train from there.—

If you have never taken the [boat] trip on the Hudson River, it is well worth the day given to it—leaving New York at 9—to Kingston—arriving at Binnewater at 4:30

Swamiji is delighted at the thought of seeing you and your sister.¹¹

He was indeed. “I am dying to see Isabel and Harriet,” he wrote to Mary Hale.¹² But for one reason or another, the two girls were long in coming. Swami Abhedananda arrived at Swamiji’s call two weeks before them, as attested by his diary, portions of which have very kindly been made available to me by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math in Calcutta. The Swami’s entry for September 8 reads:

Arrived at Kingston at 7:30 P.M. drove to Ridgely and arrived there at 9:30 P.M. Saw Swamis V. and T. and lived with them.

The three Swamis lived, of course, in “Swamiji’s Cottage.” In *Vivekananda, a Biography in Pictures*, one finds a photograph (here reproduced) of the Swamis, together with Mrs. Leggett, Miss MacLeod, Alberta, and a friend of Alberta’s, whose name is not known. Another photograph of the same people, taken on the same day, at the same place (the circular portico at the back of the main house), has been kindly supplied by Mrs. Frances Leggett. Here one sees Swamiji standing and looking unwell and Alberta with her face in her hands, shielding her eyes from the afternoon sun.

Swami Abhedananda stayed at Ridgely for about ten days,

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

leaving on September 17 or 18 for New York, where (before going on to Massachusetts) he met Sister Nivedita, who arrived from England on September 19.¹³ As Mrs. Ashton Jonson had predicted, Nivedita had not fared well in England as far as raising support or interest in her girls' school was concerned. Nor, it would seem, had she been able to reawaken enthusiasm for Swamiji's work. "One thing I am now sure of," she had written to Miss MacLeod on September 1: "however little the Drones think they worship success, they soon drop off from a cause that fails. One must show life and growth, if one is to keep even the hearts that are won."¹⁴ In her small 1899 diary (the first 253 days of which are missing) the sole entry (September 10) for this English interlude reads, "No use," from which one might gather a certain despond.¹⁵

Josephine MacLeod went down to New York on September 17 to meet Nivedita's ship—so one learns, among other things, from the following letter written by Betty Leggett to Mrs. Bull:

19 Sept.

Dear Saint Sara,

The other sanyazin comes today no doubt as Joe went to fetch her Sunday evening.

We are all in waiting—and the week promises a look at you all—including Dr Helmer. Let naught prevent an early arrival.

I hope Olea is mending rapidly & when she can hold together let her come and be upon the couch in the great hall—or the loggia & listen! How I regret it all—and wish we had sent for her to come when we learned of Swami's departure from England as we were sorely tempted to do.... We expect Mrs [Florence] Adams the 22nd. Swami needs Dr Helmer badly—he needs to be told the end is not yet. There are many hours when he thinks It is near, as symptoms are graver, in his mind, by heredity.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Joe arrives today. The big cottage awaits you—and is ready.

Swami & Turiananda are in yours—to be more cozy. Swamiji is writing a book on Modern Hindoos—to make some independent means—and to keep busy. He is grand in type as ever.¹⁸

It was not until the following day, Wednesday, September 20, that Joe and Nivedita arrived from New York. The day after that they wrote jointly to Mrs. Bull, whose ill luck at being detained for so many weeks is, one cannot help but note, our good luck, for we learn considerably more about events and people through the letters written to her from Ridgely Manor than we would otherwise have known. The letter of September 21 read:

Dearest S. S.

Margo & I arrived at 3 P.M. yesterday after a joyous 24 hours together.—

I am beginning to feel that I am almost as glad to know her as Swamiji.

Today we decked her in our finery—then came down to Swamiji for criticism—which never came.

He put the decision entirely into Margot's care and she said "If I may do as I choose, I shall wear my brahma-charini gerrua *always*—white on the platform—black otherwise," & so it is decided—and tomorrow we will go to Kingston to see what can be bought in the way of tough material.

She *never* was greater, & *Betty* approves in each detail of *her attitude* to Swami. Not one thing wld she have Margot change—& her verdict is final in social matters as Margot's is in spiritual.

Your telegram was a blow—last night—10 days longer away—but "Mother knows best"

I have no servants for you yet.

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

Dr. Helmer will decide what Swamiji is to do and in this *his* verdict will be final.

Hearts love to my child [Olea] & her mother.

[Nivedita added a line:] My sweet Grannie—no idea had I that post time had come. It was the desire of my heart to write to you this morning. Here I am—Plans are growing like flowers. I long to see you & begged Y.Y. to let me come & try to carry off Mrs Vaughan & you! But of course I saw that that was a wrong suggestion—Anyway, you will be here directly. Lovingly your Child,¹⁷ Margot.

(It is probable that Nivedita's "Grannie" as applied to Mrs. Bull had a different origin than Swami Saradananda's "Granny." The relationship in Nivedita's case was no doubt through Swamiji, her spiritual father, who looked upon Mrs. Bull as "mother.")

Late that afternoon, inspired perhaps by Nivedita's decision to wear the robes of a novice nun, Swamiji wrote for her one of his most beautiful poems, entitled "Peace." He handed it to her on her return from a drive around the countryside. The reader will perhaps be familiar with the full poem, for it has long since been published in volume four of the *Complete Works*; but here, in any case, are a few stanzas:

Behold, it comes in might,
The power that is not power,
The light that is in darkness,
The shade in dazzling light.

.

It is beauty never seen,
And love that stands alone,
It is song that lives un-sung,
And knowledge never known.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

It is death between two lives,
And lull between two storms,
The void whence rose creation,
And that where it returns.¹⁸

The next day (Friday, September 22) the McKindley sisters at last arrived, much to Swamiji's joy. Of this event, as well as of the arrival and verdict of Dr. Helmer, Miss MacLeod wrote to Mrs. Bull:

Saturday September 23. 99

Dearest St. Sara.

The two McKindley girls came yesterday. Since which time Swamiji has been bubbling over with boyishness—

Dr. Helmer came at 6—& by 7 we knew that Swamiji's trouble is curable—a spreading of the spine causes the kidney trouble—& though his heart & kidney are affected, Dr says there is no reason he should not be as strong as he—smoking is gradually to be reduced to nothingness (Nirvana!)

I still think you better come via Albany—and I think if Olea is here Dr. will come up next *Saturday*—

He is to stay till Monday & is now shooting blue clay pigeons with Hol—who has a new gun.

The McKindleys we drive to Kingston today.

This is only a line to tell you Swamiji speaks of you & Olea daily & would go over to you if we would let him.

Dr Helmer seems to be happy—& I love him.

Margot is winning all hearts.

I will send Berta [Alberta Sturges] over to bring Olea—if you will allow. She wants to go—& seems to think she is not “au complet” without Olea—

Hearts love¹⁹

Jojo

Dr. Helmer's diagnosis of Swamiji's illness, it should be noted here, was later to be rejected by Miss Macleod's next miracle-worker, of whom more in a later chapter. But whatever the cause and nature of his poor health, the cheerful, well-regulated, but informal life at Ridgely Manor was a balm to him. His hosts and fellow guests well understood his need for privacy and freedom as well as for congenial, lighthearted company, and they gave him all three. "He was allowed to shape the course of his own day without suggestion or hindrance," a New York student (Laura Glenn, later Sister Devamata) wrote in after years. "Occasionally he would come to Miss MacLeod and say: 'I am getting tired of this lazy, idle life. I am going back to New York.' 'All right, Swamiji,' she would reply at once. 'There is a train that leaves to-morrow morning at four o'clock. Would you like to take that?' He [would] not go."¹ "I feel perfectly at home," he wrote in early September to Mary Hale. And indeed, no sooner had he set foot in Ridgely Manor than his thoughts were flowing out freely to the friends who surrounded him. He told of new ideas, of his new message—a message ready for the mission that lay still uncharted and uncertain in the future.

"Swamiji is blessed," Miss MacLeod wrote to Mrs. Bull on September 3, "and has his new message ready—that all there is in life is *character*, that Buddhas & Christs do more harm than good—for mankind is trying to imitate them—instead of developing its own character! Oh it is grand & thrills one—that 'in one's greatest hour of need *one stands alone*.' . . . He is indeed a Prophet with a new message!"² Here was the theme that was to sound forth so often and so emphatically throughout his second visit to America. Once again we hear its announcement at Ridgely Manor in a recollection of Maud Stumm's: "Nearly every day," she wrote, "Swami was wonderful in a new way; and now it would be music that he dwelt upon, now art, and once he burst into the morning room,

declaring for 'Liberty.' 'What do I care if Mahomet *was* a good man, or Buddha! Does that alter *my* own goodness or evil? Let us be good for our own sake on our own responsibility! Not because somebody way back there was good!' ”³

In a "New York Letter" dated "Sep. 1899" to the *Brahma-vadin*, "An American Brahmacharini" (possibly Miss Ellen Waldo) wrote also of Swamiji's new message, having heard of it perhaps from Swami Abhedananda or, again, from Miss MacLeod when the latter was in town to meet Nivedita. "The few chosen ones who have heard the Swami in easy home-talks since his arrival," she recounted, "are deeply impressed with the great message of truth he bears;—a larger and fuller prophecy and vision than any he has yet given to the East or West."⁴

But the full development and pronouncement of Swamiji's new message had to wait its season. In the meanwhile he consciously, purposefully relaxed, keeping his mind from his many concerns, hoping to gain in physical strength. "Do you know what I am trying to do now?" he asked Mary Hale in his September letter, and answered, "writing a book on India and her people—a short chatty simple something. Again I am going to learn French." He also tried his hand at golf on the nearby links. "I do not think it difficult at all," he wrote, "—only it requires good practice."⁵

There would have been rich hours of talk, or of reading, in the loggia—a wide, open porch on the left side of the house as one faced it from the back lawn—or of undisturbed naps in the quiet afternoons, Swamiji "lying at full length on the green couch in the hall [Maud Stumm wrote], sound asleep like a tired child."⁶ Again, there would have been games of croquet, or, perhaps, of gentle tennis, carriage drives through the lovely countryside or up Mount Mohonk, a favorite jaunt, and in the cool, luminous air of sundown there would have been strolls on the wide lawns, Swamiji making a picture that the enraptured Miss Stumm long remembered: "With his flame-colored robes draped about him, what a figure he was as he

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

strode the lawns of Ridgely! His stride came nearer to the poet's description of a 'step that spurned the earth' than anything I ever expect to see again; and there was a compelling majesty in his presence and carriage that could not be imitated or described."⁷

Dinner, served in the dining room—a room not large, but elegant with black marble mantelpiece, rich wallpaper, and stately, carved sideboards⁸—was generally more or less informal. Swamiji, sitting always on Mrs. Leggett's right, was perfectly at liberty to excuse himself for a smoke or a walk. There was, however, a way to hold him. "A very quick word from Lady Betty [how many times! Miss Stumm recalled] that she believed there was to be ice cream would turn him back instantly, and he would sink into his place with a smile of expectancy and pure delight seldom seen on the face of anybody over sixteen. He just loved it, and he had all he wanted, too."⁹ "He particularly liked chocolate ice cream," Miss MacLeod related in her memoirs, "because, 'I too am chocolate and I like it,' he would say."¹⁰ But at least once (special guests perhaps having come) "a very large and elaborate dinner was given at Ridgely." "The flowers and lights on the table were wonderful," Maud Stumm wrote, "and the ladies [were] all in their loveliest gowns and jewels." (She had been half entranced by all this brilliance and gaiety, and she remembered that Swamiji, noticing her bemusement, had shatted it with a quiet word through "all the noise of other talk." "Don't let it fool you, Baby," he had said.)¹¹

And then there would be long gaslit evenings in the great hall—the wide central hall that ran through the house from front to back, making a cheerful room with its broad staircase, white columns, a big fireplace, sofas and upholstered chairs. It was a room more lived in than the formal sitting room that adjoined it. Generally, the front and back doors would be open, and the pulsating sounds of the summer night would accompany Swamiji's mellow yet authoritative tones as he talked on, sometimes for hours at a time. Of those evening

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

talks (held on chilly nights around a fire). Miss MacLeod wrote in her memoirs:

In the evening...he would talk, and once, after he came out with some of his thoughts, a lady said, "Swami, I don't agree with you there." "No? Then it is not for you," he answered. Someone else said, "Oh, but that is where I find you true." "Ah, then it was for you," he said, showing that utter respect for the other man's views. One evening he was so eloquent, about a dozen people listening, his voice becoming so soft and seemingly far away; when the evening was over, we all separated without even saying good-night to each other. Such a holy quality pervaded. My sister, Mrs. Leggett, had occasion to go to one of the rooms afterward. There she found one of the guests, an agnostic, weeping. "What do you mean!" my sister asked, and the lady said, "That man has given me eternal life. I never wish to hear him again."¹²

(This curious reaction reminds one of Harriet Monroe, the poet, who, after hearing Swamiji at the Parliament of Religions in September of 1893, wrote, "One cannot repeat a perfect moment—the futility of trying to has been almost a superstition with me. Thus I made no effort to hear Vivekananda speak again, during that autumn and winter when he was making converts by the score.")¹³

Among Swamiji's occupations at Ridgely Manor was a pursuit of the art of drawing, which he undertook with all the eagerness and concentration of an aspiring young student, "toiling over his crayons," as his teacher wrote, "with as single a mind and heart as if that were his vocation."¹⁴ And he did wonderfully well. Maud Stumm's marveling account of his drawing lessons is included in her memoirs of Swamiji, from which I have been quoting now and then. These invaluable reminiscences were written at Josephine MacLeod's

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

request and were first published in *Vedanta and the West* (November-December 1953), having been made available by Mrs. Frances Leggett.

One day [Miss Stumm recalled] he told me that he wanted to undertake some sort of work that would keep his hands busy and prevent him from thinking of things that fretted him at that time—and would I give him drawing lessons? So materials were produced, and at an appointed hour he came, promptly, bringing to me, with a curious little air of submission, a huge red apple, which he laid in my hands, bowing gravely. I asked him the significance of this gift, and he said, “in token that the lessons may be fruitful”—and such a pupil as he proved to be! Once only did I have to tell him anything; his memory and concentration were marvellous, and his drawings strangely perfect and intelligent for a beginner. By the time he had taken his fourth lesson, he felt quite equal to a portrait; so... Turiyananda posed, like any bronze image, and was drawn capitally—all in the study of Mr. Leggett, with its divan for our seat, and its fine light to aid us...¹⁵

On a hot summer day Miss Stumm and others asked Swamiji to show how he wound his turban—a demonstration he had given perhaps countless times in the West for fascinated children and grownups alike. Now at Ridgely Manor he wound and unwound the length of silk, disclosing the mysteries not only of his own turban but of other kinds as well. “When he arranged it as the desert people do, to keep the neck from the great heat,” Miss Stumm recounted, “I asked him to pose, and he did, talking all the time. That was the day he talked to us of purity and truth.”¹⁶

I am able to reproduce here a photograph of Maud Stumm's drawing of Swamiji *au Bedouin*, which has, at least, historical value. (“The lines of the mouth were so simple and lovely

and yet so very difficult!" Miss Stumm wrote of her attempts to draw him.) Unfortunately, Swamiji's own drawings of Swami Turiyananda, Nivedita, and others no longer exist, or are at present lost to us. He himself, one imagines, would not have destroyed them, for he took immense pride in his new-found talent.

Thus the days slipped by, all of them beautiful, each marked by some special, unforgettable conversation or incident—a long, spellbinding talk on a balmy evening, or so small a thing as the sight of a flaming robe flashing in and out of the shade of the old chestnut trees or of a dark head bent over a sketch book, its owner lost to the world.

In his letter to Mary Hale, Swamiji mentioned that he intended to go to New York to see "the Dewey procession."¹⁷ His reference was to the public welcome to be held on Friday, September 29, for Admiral George Dewey, who almost a year and a half earlier had won a naval victory in Manila Bay. He was still an idolized national hero, and the reception accorded him in New York, with its wildly ecstatic crowds, fireworks, and parades, and "Welcome, Dewey" spelled out in electric lights on Brooklyn Bridge, would have been worth the trip to see. But whether or not Swamiji went to see it is not at present known. In any event, the excursion would barely have interrupted the flow of summer days at Ridgely Manor—days that glided gently, almost imperceptibly into autumn.

3

October brought changes to the household. Mrs. Bull finally arrived on Saturday, October 7, followed several days later by Olea. But as things turned out, Miss MacLeod's plans again miscarried. Two days later "the great summer" came, for her, to an unexpected end. On Monday, October 9 (a date noted in Sister Nivedita's small diary), a letter came to Ridgely from a Mrs. S. K. Blodgett, a widow, who was then unknown to Joe and Betty, saying that their brother, Taylor



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EDWARD T. STURDY



RESIDENCE OF MRS. SAMUEL R. NOBEL, WIMBLEDON



HIGH STREET, WIMBLEDON, 1969



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (PASTEL BY MAUD STUMM)



RIDGELY MANOR, c. 1890



THE "LITTLE COTTAGE" AT RIDGELY



GROUP ON CIRCULAR VERANDAH AT RIDGELY MANOR



GROUP ON CIRCULAR VERANDAH AT RIDGELY MANOR



FRANCIS H. LEGGETT, c. 1897



ALBERTA STURGES. c. 1896



MARY HALE, c. 1896



WALTON PLACE FLAT, CHICAGO

Chicago,
the 30th Nov '99

My dear Swami Vivekananda -

I am going to leave this place to-
night. They have given me a new book
a big one. The Master's book is with
me only the second volume. The first volume
must be at Boston. Kindly send it - C/o Dr.
They have been very kind. Madame Cabrini
came to see me day before yesterday -
She is a great woman.

I have nothing to write here except
that Swami is doing very well except
some trouble with coughing & cold night -
that the frightened them with her mother
that Swami can not make imitation !!
Hope things are going on with you very
well. This is in haste - Write in haste
for California

My love
Mrs. Van der

Longman

Vivekananda

MacLeod, lay seriously ill, perhaps dying, in her home in Los Angeles.

"Within two hours I was packed," Miss MacLeod wrote in her memoirs, "the horses were at the door... and as I went out Swami put up his hand and said some Sanskrit blessing and then he called out, 'Get up some classes and I will come' ".¹

She could not have left Ridgely without a painful wrench at her heart; yet she drove off with a characteristic resilience and valiance, an acceptance of everything that came her way, which was indeed one of the traits for which Swamiji loved her. Some two weeks later he was to pay her a tribute during the course of a conversation: She was the only one among the group at Ridgely who had attained freedom, he said, and in this he included himself. She could leave everything and everybody and go out to do her work without ever looking back—a quality won only through thousands of lifetimes. And indeed Miss MacLeod had the buoyancy and wide-heartedness that comes from an innate and true detachment. "Jojo is the same as usual," she wrote of herself that summer at Ridgely. "I am radiant and happy & don't want anything on earth but a few more people to love."² It was always so with her; nothing mattered, neither luxury nor misery.

In Swamiji's parting call to Miss MacLeod—"Get up some classes and I will come"—one finds the first indication that he felt once again the desire to carry his message to far, and perhaps fertile, fields. Yet only in retrospect does one see that call as the announcement of a new and great mission; there were no flourishes, no rolling of drums; indeed Swamiji's call seemed at the time to have been only a passing thought, rising like a token bubble from some depths where the future was being formed, glinting for a moment, and then floating off.

With Miss MacLeod gone to California—or *Kali*-fornia, as she liked to spell it—and most of the young people gone back to school, to college, or to work, their vacations over, October was a relatively quiet month at Ridgely. Yet it was not a dull one; for where Swamiji was, there dullness was totally precluded.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

We learn now of his days and his words from Nivedita's long, detailed, and faithful letters to "Yum-Yum," which come almost on the heels of the latter's chatty but sketchy letters to Mrs. Bull and which have been published, in part at least, in the *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, a collection of memoirs that pertain to various periods of his life in both India and the West. Here again we catch glimpses of Swamiji through Nivedita's eyes, and again hear echoes of his voice. We see him "pacing up and down for an hour and a half" warning her "against politeness, against this 'Lovely' and 'Beautiful,' against this continual feeling of the external," admonishing her "to get rid of all these petty relations of society and home, to hold the soul firm against the perpetual appeals of senses, to realize that the rapture of autumn trees is as truly sense-enjoyment as a comfortable bed or a table dainty, to hate the silly praise and blame of people. . . ."

Or one hears him talking of Shiva: "Even meditation would be a bondage to the free soul, but Shiva goes on and on for the good of the world, the Eternal Incarnation. . . . For meditation is the greatest service, the most direct that can be rendered." He talked of Sri Ramakrishna—"full of gaiety and merriment"—and of his own days of discipleship at Dakshineswar, the temple on the Ganges, where in "perfect silence, broken only by the cries of the jackals, in the darkness under the great tree, [we sat night after night] the whole night through, and He talked to me, when I was a boy."³

"I never heard the Prophet talk so much of Sri Ramakrishna," Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod in a letter, of which only an undated, heretofore unpublished fragment exists and which could have been written from India; but the time, one thinks, could as well have been the fall of 1899, and the place, Ridgely Manor. "He told us what I had heard before of [his Master's] infallible judgement of men," she continued,

finding good and greatness in the least apparent, and

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

judging at once of the bad weight of karma that so and so had yet to work through before he could come to anything. "And so," Swami said, "you see my devotion is the dog's devotion. I have been wrong so often and He has always been right and now I trust His judgement blindly"—and then he told us how He would hypnotise anyone who came to him and in 2 minutes know all about him & Swami said that from this he had learnt to count our consciousness as a very small thing.

They believe on grounds of this sort in the Math that Swami is Arjuna—and that there in the Garden at Dakshineswar they have once more seen Krishna talking with His Disciple, giving him, as it were, a new Gita.⁴

And there was the time Swamiji startled Mrs. Leggett and Olea with his denunciation of the rigid laws and conventions of society by means of which the strong oppress the weak and with his admiration of individuals strong and courageous enough to break through those laws. He did not hesitate to uphold the dark side of individual sovereignty, facing and embracing the Terrible, seeing even the criminal as an essential, indeed glorious, part of humanity's great surging drive toward freedom.

Or he might spend an hour or so writing a poem. One of these, only recently made known to us, might well have been written for his hosts, who were finding happiness and renewed youth in their life together:

One circle more the spiral path of life ascends,
And Time's restless shuttle—running back and fro
Through maze of warp and woof of shining
Threads of life—spins out a stronger piece.

Hand in hand they stand—and try
To fathom depths whence springs eternal love,
Each in other's eyes,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

And find no power holds o'er that age
But brings the youth anew to them,
And time—the good, the pure, the true.⁵

At times Swamiji was in a “great mood of devotion,” at other times he would extol the path of the jnani, “he who likes nothing and witnesses all.”⁶ Again, “he spoke of Kali, and grew full of worship.”⁷ Or he spoke prophetically of social problems, of “the mixture of races, and of the great tumults, the terrible tumults through which the next state of things must be reached.”⁸ He pointed out the hidden meanings of ancient Hindu myths and epics, of their bearing on modern life, of the ideals they depicted, the lessons they taught. Indeed, Swamiji talked, it would seem, of everything under the sun, and upon everything he cast the clear, brilliant light of another sun, the sun of *Brahmavidya*, infinitely more lustrous, more revealing.

Even the lightest of talk would call forth some jewel to savor and to pass on to “Yum.” His friends teased him for his pride in so relatively small a thing as poetry or painting:

At one of the meals [Nivedita wrote on October 18] Mrs. Bull turned and pointed out how his poetry had been the weak point on which he had been beguiled to the loss of honour. And she said her husband was never sensitive to criticism about his music. That he expected. He knew it was not perfect. But on road engineering he felt deeply and could be flattered. Then, in our amusement, we all teased Swami for his carelessness about his religious teacherhood and his vanity about his portrait painting; and he suddenly said, “You see there is one thing called Love, and there is another thing called Union; and Union is greater than Love. I do not love religion, I have become identified with it. It is my life; so no man loves that thing in which his life has been spent, in which he really has accomplished something.

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

That which we love is not yet oneself. Your husband did not love music for which he had always studied; he loved engineering, in which as yet he knew comparatively little. This is the difference between *bhakti* and *jnana*; and this is why *jnana* is greater than *bhakti*.”⁹

Once Swamiji spoke of his pain at the blow Sturdy had dealt him. “On Thursday evening [November 2] Swami came in when two of us were talking earnestly,” Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod; “so he joined in, of course. For the first time he talked of defection and disease and treachery. Amongst other things, he said he found himself still the Sannyasin, he minded no loss, but he could be hurt through defection. Treachery cut deep.”¹⁰ And a day or two later he spoke so impassionedly of his anguish, perhaps multicaused, that Nivedita “fled to [her] room to cry.”¹¹ “Then he followed me,” she wrote in this same letter, “and stood at the door a minute and revealed still more of the awful suffering.” Only this (though this is enough) and lines of a poem entitled “To My Own Soul” give glimpses into Swamiji’s continuing sense of anxiety and frustration during this period. “Hold yet a while, Strong Heart,” he wrote, “Not part a lifelong yoke/ Though blighted looks the present, future gloom.”¹² And, to be sure, his heart held strong, his courage never deserted him; nor were his compassion and concern for others lessened or overshadowed in the slightest. To those who needed his help he would talk sometimes for hours.

There was, for instance, Olea, Mrs. Bull’s melancholy and generally ailing daughter, who was divorced from her husband and whose child had died the previous year. According to Nivedita’s diary for Sunday, October 15, Swamiji and others stayed home instead of attending the services at the village church. One can gather from Nivedita’s brief notations that Swamiji not only talked about patriotism that morning but also found time to talk to Olea for three solid hours, in an effort, one can be sure, to lift her heart. In Nivedita’s diary

one finds still another indication of Swamiji's concern for Olea. On Friday, October 27, there is the entry: "[Swamiji] to Olea—'nightmares always begin pleasantly—only at the worst point [the] dream is broken—so death breaks [the] dream of life. Love death.'"

(It may have been because of Olea's unhappy marriage, among others, that Alberta asked Swamiji, "Is there no happiness in marriage?" He replied, "Yes, Alberta, if marriage is entered into as a great austerity—and everything is given up—even principle!"¹³ He did not minimize the difficulty of the householder's lot. "I don't want to be a monk," Hollister once protested, "I want to marry and have children." "All right, my boy," Swamiji answered. "Remember only that you choose the harder path.")¹⁴

He had a word or a blessing for everyone, even (or perhaps especially) for the baby, Frances. One morning, as Alberta told it in later years to her sister, the child came in from the garden, some flowers in her hand. She gave them to Swamiji, who said gravely, "In India we give flowers to our teachers." And he pronounced over her some Sanskrit words.¹⁵

Seeing anyone depressed or worried, for whatever reason, he would go out of his way to dispel that person's particular nightmare—at least for the time being. "I had a worriment that bothered me a good deal," Miss Stumm wrote in her notes, "and though I said nothing of it to anyone, it was constantly in my thoughts." She went on to tell how Swamiji had asked her to go for a walk with him to watch a threshing machine in a nearby field, and how, as they walked, he told her of the wonderful party that had been held the night before at the Manor: "Wonderful affair," he exclaimed, "stringed instruments and such a supper! Pheasants!" Where had she been? *Everybody* was there and "they danced and danced," everything moved out of the house. "Wonderful party!" This gala affair, to which Maud Stumm had not been invited and which had somehow been kept secret from her until now, was, of course, all Swamiji's fairy tale, conjured up

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

to divert her mind. And divert her mind it did, like shock therapy dealt with a magic wand.¹⁶

Miss Stumm's "worriment" may have been connected with a breaking heart, for she was suffering at this time, and later, from an unrequited love of long standing. Yet even so, Mrs. Frances Leggett remembers, she was tremendous fun, always highly entertaining and amusing.

Sometimes Swamiji would join those who escorted her home in the evenings to the little village of Stone Ridge. We learn of one such walk in Nivedita's diary-entry for Sunday, October 15, in which, after noting Swamiji's talk with Olea, she continued: "Afternoon, Swami drew me while I wrote. Read Sch[openhauer]. Walk home with Miss Stumm by moonlight." And of this same evening Nivedita wrote (as published) to "Yum":

On Sunday evening three of us accompanied a guest to her home. We had been reading Schopenhauer on "Women" aloud. Coming back it was wonderful moonlight, and we walked on up the avenue in silence; it seemed as if a sound would have been desecration. About it Swami said, "When a tiger in India is on the trail of prey at night, if its paw or tail makes the least sound in passing, it bites it till the blood comes." And he talked of the need we Western women had to absorb beauty quietly, and turn it over in the mind at another time.¹⁷

Two days later (on Tuesday, October 17) Nivedita went into retreat, intending to remain secluded for fifteen days, or until November 1. "You see," she wrote to "Yum," "I have to finish *Kali the Mother* [a small book, which as early as October 2 she had been "deep in writing on," as Miss MacLeod had reported],¹⁸ and there are other things I have to do—and I have always longed to try a retreat anyway, and my great obstacle was the Master."¹⁹ Possibly Nivedita's retreat, for which she had finally obtained Swamiji's permission, took place in her room in the main house, or,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

conceivably, in one of the now unoccupied rooms over the stable, or, again, in Mrs. Bull's "Big Cottage"; but whatever its setting, it does not seem to have lasted long. On Friday, October 20, she wrote in her diary "went down to supper," and from subsequent entries it would appear that thereupon the retreat had come to an end.

But however that may be, the weeks sped by. November came, bringing chilly days, and with it came the season of activity and work. One morning after breakfast Swamiji suddenly turned to his disciple. "How much longer are you going to hang on here?" he demanded. "When are you going to decide to leave and begin your work?"²⁰ She must be a *kshatriya*, he told her, a worker, a fighter; austerity was her path. So it was decided then and there that Nivedita would leave for Chicago with Olea on November 7. On the same date Mrs. Bull would leave for Cambridge, Swamiji for New York. (Swami Turiyananda had already left Ridgely at the end of October and had gone on to Montclair, New Jersey.)

But before the last partings came, an extraordinary event took place, which seemed at the time to be of great import to all concerned. I quote here Nivedita's account of the incident in a letter to Miss MacLeod, dated November 11, 1899, a facsimile of which is given in Sankari Prasad Basu's Bengali book *Lokamata Nivedita*. The day of which the letter tells was the previous Sunday, November 5. (Whether Swamiji was still living in the "Little Cottage" or had moved to the "Big Cottage" or to the Manor is not clear):

On Sunday afternoon Swami insisted on my coming and packing with him, & as I worked he took out a couple of silk turbans to give the girls. Then two pieces of cotton cloth—gerrua colour—for Mrs. Bull. He called me to my room, where Mrs. Bull sat writing, to give these, & left the turbans on one side.

First he shut the door—then he arranged the cloth as a skirt & chudder round her waist—then he called her a

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

sannyasini & putting one hand on her head & one on mine he said: "I give you *all* that Ramakrishna P[aramahansa] gave to me. What came to us from a woman [the Divine Mother] I give to you two women. Do what you can with it. I cannot trust myself. I do not know what I might do tomorrow & ruin the work. Women's hands will be the best anyway to hold what came from a woman—from Mother. Who & what She is, I do not know, I have never seen Her, but Ramakr[ishna] P. saw Her & touched Her, like this (touching my sleeve). She may be a great disembodied spirit for all I know. Anyway I cast the load on you. I am going away to be at peace. I felt nearly mad this morning, & I was thinking and thinking what I could do, when I went to my room to sleep before lunch. And then I thought of this & I was so glad. It is like a release. I have borne it all this time, & now I have given it up...."

Were these exactly the words he used? I think they were. It seems to me that it must have been about 3 o'clock or shortly after, for I think it was daylight still, & then I went back with him to the packing & very long after, as it seems now, he seemed surprised when I told him to go downstairs to the fire—I could do the rest of the work alone—& went like a relieved child. Just before he called me to "the Robing" he had said: "Oh! I feel so gay!"

(We both thought of you at that moment Darling—& I for one was glad that you were away—for your life is his personally—& you are still to be the Good Star which could not be if you were entangled in all that has been so hard on him.)

And so, Yum, happened "the event of my life"—the great turning-point—and the dear St. Sara's.²¹

In her diary, Sister Nivedita wrote of this unforgettable day more briefly, making the entry on November 5: "Our

wonderful Sunday. Swami's release." Her letter to Miss MacLeod continued:

Next morning he came over to Ridgely, and Mrs. Leggett managed to throw Mrs. R. Smith with him, knowing that she was hungry for a word. It seems that she asked him what his message was. And he answered: "I have no message. I used to think I had, but now I know that I have nothing for the world. Only for myself I must break this dream." It sounds so limp and forceless, when I repeat it! And it was so great and stern as he told us of it.

As far as is known, Mrs. Bull, whom Swamiji had once referred to as "the least cranky" woman he knew in the West,²² never made public (or, for that matter, private) claim to the title of sannyasini, which she clearly received in that spontaneous, brief, and informal ceremony at Ridgely Manor. As for Swamiji's bestowal upon her and Nivedita of his powers—or, at least, it would seem, of the power to carry out certain aspects of his mission—he did so in all solemnity. Many months earlier, at the close of 1898, as Mrs. Bull was leaving India, Swamiji had written to her, "Ere this I had only love for you, but recent developments prove that you are appointed by the Mother to watch over my life, hence, faith has been added to love! As regards me and my work I hold henceforth that you are inspired and will gladly shake off all responsibilities from my shoulder and abide by what the Mother ordains through you."²³ During the months that were to follow the ceremony, he was often to remind Mrs. Bull of her role in his work and of his implicit faith in her judgment. But what actual and practical effect his bestowal of power upon these two disciples had in the implementation of his mission, what effect it had on Mrs. Bull's life, in what sense it constituted "the great turning point" for her and Nivedita, what "release" it actually gave to Swamiji—these are questions which would, I think, be hard to answer.

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

Two days later Swamiji left Ridgely Manor for New York. And thus the "great summer," those wonderful ten weeks "when God Himself seemed to walk and talk with them," that golden time, never to be repeated, came to an end.

4

On his arrival in New York on Tuesday, November 7, 1899, Swamiji went at once to the new Office and Library of the Vedanta Society which he had founded six years earlier, and there, at about 5:30 p.m., Swami Abhedananda (who noted the event in his diary) came to greet him. The Vedanta Society's rooms occupied "a spacious parlor floor" of a narrow, four-story house at 146 East Fifty-fifth Street (between Lexington and Third Avenues) and constituted the first permanent Vedanta headquarters in New York. As newsletters to the *Brahmavadin* and *Prabuddha Bharata* informed their readers, the two "large and pleasant rooms [which could] seat over one hundred persons" had been formally opened on October 15, just three weeks before Swamiji's arrival from Ridgely Manor. A library with a number of philosophical and religious books, loaned or donated, had been started, and the rooms, furnished largely with contributed odds and ends, were open "every afternoon and evening, a daily meditation hour being established from four to five P.M." The headquarters was used also for weekday lectures, classes, and private interviews. On Sunday afternoons, however, Swami Abhedananda regularly lectured in a public hall, the Sunday attendance numbering around three hundred, and growing.¹

Things were flourishing in the New York Vedanta Society. During his two years of work Swami Abhedananda (sent to America by Mr. Sturdy in the summer of 1897, as the reader will remember) had been eminently successful. "In New York, the most difficult city in the United States in which to reach the spiritual nature of people, Swami Abhedananda has made a profound impression," a September 1899 letter to the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Brahmavadin stated. "Two years of patient, persistent, loving service has established Vedanta in a consecrated body of earnest students who are devoted to the continuance of the work."²

Nor was the progress of the Vedanta movement in New York remarked upon only by students of Vedanta, parochially, as it were. In its October 1899 issue, the *Arena*, an important and widely read American monthly, published an article by an Anna J. Ingersoll entitled "The Swamis in America." Miss Ingersoll spoke knowledgeably of the good work being done by the New York Vedanta Society, "since 1894, sustaining a teacher and giving a course of eighty lectures during the winter months [and] now recognized as a growingly important factor in the thought-movement of the day."³ (This same issue of the *Arena* also carried a long article entitled "An Interpretation of the Vedanta," by Horatio W. Dresser of Boston. The interpretation was informed, thoughtful, and, though not without Western prejudice, highly respectful of Vedanta as a noble and needed philosophy.)⁴

On the evening Swamiji arrived in New York (a Tuesday) there was to be a regular weekly lecture at the Vedanta Society's rooms. He "was urged to take charge of the meeting," a letter to the *Brahmavadin* reported, "...Swami Abhedananda introducing the Swami in words of love and reverence as the founder of the present Vedanta work in New York and the pioneer and prophet of Vedanta Philosophy in America. Swami Vivekananda presided and gave the evening to questions and answers."⁵

Of that evening, which had held so fine a surprise for the students who were present, we know nothing more, except that after Swamiji had answered all the questions and greeted all his friends, old and new, Swami Abhedananda (as he wrote in his diary) "walked down with him to Mr. Leggett's house [at 21 West Thirty-fourth Street]." (This would have been a walk of some twenty-five blocks, but most of them were short and all of them level.)

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

"In the morning," Swami Abhedananda noted the following day, "I called on Mr. Leggett and saw S. V. . . . Afterwards I went with S. V. to Dr. Guernsey [Guernsey] and lunched with him. Came home at 2:30."⁶ During his first visit to America, Swamiji had often stayed with Dr. and Mrs. Egbert Guernsey in their New York house and, in 1894, had also visited their summer place at Fishkill Landing (now Beacon) on the Hudson. The Guernseys looked upon him as a son (indeed, he reminded them of an only son whom they had lost)⁷ and he was ever welcome in their home. Dr. Guernsey, then in his late seventies, was a prominent New York physician, well known and honored for his many charities. He was also, among other things, a founder and member of the prestigious Union League Club and a founder and editor-in-chief of the important *New York Medical Times*. From 1882 until sometime in the late nineties, the Guernseys had lived in a four-story house at 528 Fifth Avenue (between Forty-third and Forty-fourth streets). But as commerce crept inexorably up the Avenue, the doctor, like many others, sold his house. The family moved further uptown into a fashionable apartment building, called "The Madrid," at 180 West Fifty-ninth Street, overlooking Central Park and part of a mammoth block of coordinated apartment buildings, all of a grandiose architecture presumably Moorish. (Here also lived the Albert Spalding family, whom Swamiji knew.)⁸

The Dictionary of American Biography describes Dr. Egbert Guernsey as "a man of huge bulk . . . [whose] character and personality are said to have been memorialized in Bret Harte's tale *The Man Whose Yoke Was Not Easy*." In this story one finds a physician characterized as "a man of broad culture and broader experience; a man who had devoted the greater part of his active life to the alleviation of sorrow and suffering; . . . a man who had acquired a universal tenderness and breadth of kindly philosophy; a man who, day and night, was at the beck and call of Anguish; . . . in brief, a man who so nearly lived up to the example of the Great Master that it

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

seems strange I am writing of him as a doctor of medicine and not of divinity." That was the man who was Swamiji's friend and who had opened his heart to him.

It was in Dr. Guernsey's apartment on the afternoon of Wednesday, November 8, 1899, very possibly a short time after Swami Abhedananda had left, that Swamiji suffered an emotional shock at the unexpected sight of one who, lamentably, had closed his heart. In a published letter to Miss MacLeod (which in the *Complete Works* has been wrongly dated "June, 1895") he tells of the incident: "Dr. Guernsey, after examining other things, was feeling my pulse, when suddenly Landsberg (whom they had forbidden the house) got in and retreated immediately after seeing me. Dr. Guernsey burst out laughing and declared he would have paid that man for coming just then, for he was then sure of his diagnosis of my case. The pulse before was so regular, but just at the sight of Landsberg it almost stopped from emotion."⁹

Swamiji had last seen his disciple Leon Landsberg in March of 1896. Since that time (and before that time) Landsberg had not fared well; his story was, indeed, a dismal one. Although its details belong to an earlier period of Swamiji's mission, it can be briefly told here. He had met Swami Vivekananda in New York in the early part of 1894 when he was around forty years old, a member of the Theosophical Society, and a journalist with a job on the *New York Tribune*. A Russian Jew by birth, Landsberg was a lonely, hungry sort of man, without roots, without attachments, and without worldly ambition. "Nothing to love," he wrote of his condition in one of his revealing letters to Mrs. Bull, of which I have read many, "nothing to strive for, nothing to brighten the heart with happy dreams!"¹⁰ His meeting with Swamiji had, in a sense, supplied a happy dream; but it had also been a galvanic awakening, or, as he more vividly put it: "When I met the Swami and realized the greatness of his soul, all the love of which my heart was capable, and which was only waiting for an opportunity to escape its prison built up by prejudice and bad experience, blazed forth

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

with all its intensity like a flame that at last had found its way through the thick cover of ashes to the open air, and focussed in his person.”¹¹

Many of Landsberg's good qualities flared up in that empyreal moment—qualities for which Swamiji would always love him. Without question, he had genuine devotion to God; he had true compassion for, and generosity toward, the poor and the oppressed; quite literally he would give the shirt off his back to anyone in greater need than himself; he had an intensity of purpose that shone in his eyes with a light called by some “fanatical”; he was intelligent, highly educated, hard-working; he did not spare himself, and he could feel deeply. But Leon Landsberg also had a number of faults: hypersensitive, self-centered to an extreme degree, he was subject to fits of black depression and violent temper, open to torments of jealousy, inclined to self-pity and delusions of persecution; he could be at times a torture to himself and a source of much trouble to others. Indeed, despite his virtues, which were genuine, despite his blessings, which were immeasurable, he contained within himself the ripe seeds of disaster.

In the first part of 1895, when Swamiji had taken rooms in New York on Thirty-third Street and had started holding classes, Leon Landsberg had been his living-companion and sole assistant. At first all had been harmonious. Soor however, Swamiji's classes had grown, other students had gathered round him, many had claimed and received a share of his affection and attention. Resenting the presence of these others and their attempts to help Swamiji's work, Landsberg made enemies right and left. In addition, he quarreled with Swamiji, sulked, complained, criticized. (“I bless him,” Swamiji once said when asked how he could live with so bad-tempered a disciple. “He gives me the opportunity to practise self-control.”)¹² Around the middle of April, Swamiji left New York for a few days' rest at Ridgely Manor—his first visit there. Finding himself alone, Landsberg took this opportunity to fly. “I have now determined to break once for all my

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

relations to him," he wrote on April 16 to Mrs. Bull. "Not that I bear any grudge to him, but in the interest of the peace of our souls, in the interest of the cause it is necessary that I keep away from him. Though loving him, I shall flee his presence as if he were my greatest enemy."¹³

He moved to another roominghouse in New York and there began to "preach and teach the Lord," holding classes on karma yoga, which, he assured Mrs. Bull, would not interfere with Swamiji's classes, for they would be held on a different evening of the week.¹⁴

"May the Lord bless Landsberg wherever he goes," Swamiji wrote to a friend on his return to New York and to empty rooms. "He is one of the few sincere souls I had the privilege in this life to come across."¹⁵ He worked on alone, himself performing all the necessary, time-consuming tasks such as making lists of names, sending out notices, marketing, house-cleaning and dishwashing that his disciple had once attended to. Landsberg never returned to Thirty-third Street to help his Guru, but before the spring of 1895 came to a close, Mrs. Bull, through many letters, persuaded him to return at least in spirit. This he did, and Swamiji accepted him. We next find Landsberg at Thousand Island Park receiving sannyasa, the final monastic vows, from Swamiji, who then sent him forth to teach.

For a time all went well. Although Landsberg (now Swami Kripananda) was not particularly successful, he made a few disciples during the fall of 1895 in Buffalo, Detroit, and New York. It was not until December, when Swamiji took up quarters in the same house into which Landsberg had moved in April and where he was again living, that the old trouble flared up, this time with greater virulence. Swamiji's work was now on a larger scale than it had been the previous season, and his need for efficient and devoted workers more pressing. Mr. Josiah J. Goodwin providentially appeared upon the scene and at once took over as secretary and right-hand man; Miss Ellen Waldo, coming daily from Brooklyn, did the

cooking, ran the house, attended to various tasks, took dictation; Mr. Walter Goodyear kept accounts; other workers, whom Kripananda referred to as "that committee of petticoats,"¹⁶ were—or so it seemed to him—omnipresent. He took to a small room in the attic and—stealing in and out for his meals, for he refused to eat with Swamiji and Miss Waldo—there wrote letters to the *Brahmavadin*, did various typing work, and brooded in misery.

There was nothing anyone could do. Swamiji once climbed the many stairs to his disciple's room to assure him of his continuing love, and for a few days Kripananda's spirits rose. "I could not help yielding to the tenderness he showed me," he wrote to Mrs. Bull.¹⁷ But within a week he had sunk back into gloom. "I live here as in a desert, perfectly alone. No one to pour out my heart.... My mental agonies I cannot describe."¹⁸ As time went on, Kripananda, his mind raw with jealousy, made a number of serious blunders in connection with Swamiji's work. Further, he fatally lost his temper with his Guru; as fatally, he reviled Mrs. Bull, who had been an untiring friend, in long, railing letters.

In short, he sank deeper and deeper into a state of resentment and bitterness. In August, Swamiji, who was then in Switzerland, received news of his poor disciple. "I read from different letters a lot about Kripananda," he wrote to Goodwin. "I am sorry for him. There must be something wrong in his head. Let him alone. None of you need bother about him. As for hurting me, that is not in the power of gods or devils. So be at rest. It is unswerving love and perfect unselfishness that conquer everything. We Vedantists in every difficulty ought to ask the subjective question, 'Why do I see that?' 'Why can I not conquer this with love?' " Swamiji's own love was all-enveloping and inexhaustible. At the close of this same letter he wrote: "A few days ago, I felt a sudden irresistible desire to write to Kripananda. Perhaps he was unhappy and thinking of me. So I wrote him a warm letter. Today from the American news, I see why it was so. I sent him flowers

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

gathered near the glaciers. Ask Miss Waldo to send him some money and plenty of love. Love never dies. The love of the father never dies, whatever the children may do or be. He is my child. He has the same or more share in my love and help, now that he is in misery.”¹⁹

Almost a year later Swamiji was still thinking of the welfare of his disciple. On learning of Mrs. Bull’s and Miss MacLeod’s wish to come to India, he wrote to the latter, “If Mrs. Bull brings old Landsberg with her, that will be saving that fool’s life, as it were.”²⁰ But by this time the once warm relationship between Mrs. Bull and Kripananda had frozen beyond all thawing. Whether or not she invited him to India is at present not known, but if she did, he did not accept.

We now lose all track of Kripananda until Sunday, March 27, 1898. On that day there appeared in the *New York Herald* a full-page illustrated article. The illustrations (here reproduced) consisted of a central drawing of an apparently bona fide yogi and, grouped around it, several cartoons of men and women in nightdress, engaged in practicing various yoga postures. A large banner headline and prominent subheadings read:

IF YOU WANT TO BE A YOGI AND HAVE HEAVENLY DREAMS, STUDY THESE POSTURES

There are 84,000,000 of Them Altogether in the Hindoo Philosophy, but the Ones Here Shown Are Those Chiefly Practiced in the Privacy of Their Rooms by American Disciples of the Occult Religion. These Sketches Were Drawn from Postures Assumed by the Swami Kripananda for the Benefit of Herald Readers, and Illustrate an Occult Fad That Has Many Secret Disciples in New York City.

BALM OF THE ORIENT —IS— BLISS-INSPIRING YOGA.

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

—What a Swami Says of It.—

New York's Fashionables Now Attain
Perfect Happiness by Becoming
Amateur Contortionists.

BUT THAT IS ONLY A PART OF IT.

Yes, that was only a part of it. The Swami Kripananda not only assumed various postures for the benefit of *Herald* readers, but wrote at great length on the subject of yoga. A reporter's fairly long introduction to his article read in part:

I know it to be a fact that there are scores of men and women, perhaps hundreds, well known in New York's fashionable circles who have taken up Yoga in their ceaseless efforts to do something different. You would be astonished could you get a glimpse into some of the Fifth avenue boudoirs where the Swami Vivekananda's teachings have taken root....

Surprising as this condition of affairs is, you would be still more surprised could I disclose to you the identities of some of the prominent New York men and women who are practicing Yoga. But that is not to be considered. Vivekananda has also many converts in Boston and not a few in practical Chicago.

In Cambridge, Mrs. Ole Bull has donated a large sum of money to Harvard for the purpose of establishing the study of occult philosophy, and so deeply imbued is she with the spirit of Yoga that she has gone to India, there to delve into its mysteries amid more harmonious surroundings.

[After this came the following:]

JUST WHAT YOGA IS.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST
PRACTICE, RATIONALE AND RESULTS OF
THE ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY.

By the Swami Kripananda.

...At the Convention of the Religious Congress at Chicago [the Swami Kripananda wrote in part] was an orange gowned, erudite, wise man of the East, a Sanyasin of great learning, refinement and culture, who visited these shores for the purpose of spreading the Hindoo philosophies and incidentally to introduce the practice of Yoga, which translated means to the ordinary mind the art of developing supernatural psychic powers. He was a success from the start. Handsome, eloquent, charming in manner and convincing in his sophistries, this tawny beggar Prince soon had scores of our intelligent, practical, nineteenth century men and women sitting cross-legged in the privacy of their bedrooms, gazing for hours at the tips of their noses, or, if not too plump, staring at their navels, and breathing by set rule with patient gravity and a decorous sense of their growing spirituality.

What was the object of this uncomfortable self-inspection, this undignified contortion act, this strabismus producing, paresis encouraging foolery? Well, it was Yoga, and Yoga is a good thing. It is an ancient art from India, and that is enough to give it prestige and standing in our sensation seeking social centres, especially when introduced by so delightful a colored brother as that chocolate tinted sage, the Swami Vivekananda.

A man who can talk in Sanskrit, English and seven kinds of Hindustanee, or charm a bird off a tree, would have no trouble in introducing any sort of bosh ("bosh" is Oriental, you know) into this country. He has only to declare it occult, and hundreds are eager to stand on their heads and let their ears lop down at his word of command. But Yoga has an inherited charm in being

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

really an art and having been practiced since the days of Krishna and Rama....

Kripananda went on and on to give a five-column, derisive résumé of the "Practice, Rationale and Results" of Yoga. I shall not burden the reader with the remainder of this long article, which one finds today excruciatingly tiresome. In its own day, however, it would have bored few of its readers; on the contrary, it would have convulsed with laughter many an enemy of Swamiji's and outraged many a friend. Indeed with this ill-advised bit of malice Kripananda effectively cut himself off for good from Swamiji's supporters and disciples. He also brought down upon his head the immediate wrath of Swami Abhedananda, who (as the latter's diary records) chanced to meet him at the Leggetts' house the day the article appeared. "I scolded him," the Swami noted²¹ with what was, one imagines, quite an understatement.

In India, Swamiji of course duly heard of Kripananda's performance, and although he would have cared not at all about the article as such, there can be no question that this deliberate betrayal by one whom he loved, and over whose unhappiness and mistakes he suffered as a father, cut deep indeed. But, if anything, he only loved him more. Of his unexpected, pulse-stopping meeting with his disciple at Dr. Guernsey's in November of 1899, he wrote at the end of his letter to Miss MacLeod, "I said a few kind words to Landsberg and went upstairs to Mother Guernsey to save poor Landsberg from embarrassment."²²

As far as is known, that was the last meeting between Swamiji and Kripananda. We lose all track of the latter after that, and at the date of this writing, it is not known what became of him.

5

On the evening of Friday, November 10, the New York Vedanta Society held a reception for Swamiji. The *New York*

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Tribune briefly gave this news to its readers, together with various errors as to dates and names.¹ Far more informative, interesting, and quotable is the reminiscence of one of Swami Abhedananda's students, a young brahmacharin by the name of Gurudasa (later Swami Atulananda). In his memoirs entitled *With the Swamis in America* he wrote of his impressions of Swamiji when, at the reception, he saw him for the first time:

During the short period Swamiji stayed in New York, there was great rejoicing at the Vedanta Home. Swamiji did not give any public lectures but he attended the classes and meetings at the Vedanta Home and there he gave short talks and answered questions. A public reception was given to him at the Home and his former friends and students gathered in large numbers to meet their beloved teacher again. It was a very happy gathering. Others were also present who had long desired to meet the great Swami of whom they had heard so much.

Though public, the reception was informal. The Swami had a smile, a joke or a kind word for every one of his old friends. Part of the time he was seated on the floor, in the Indian fashion, some of the friends following his example. There was much talking and laughing and the Swami showed by a gesture or a remark that he had nowise forgotten his old students. . . .

Swamiji was so simple in his behaviour, so like one of the crowd that he did not impress me so much when I first saw him. There was nothing about his ways that would mark him as the lion of New York society as so often he had been. Simple in dress and behaviour he was just like one of us. He did not put himself aside on a pedestal as is so often the case with lionised personages. He walked about the room, sat on the floor, laughed, joked, chatted—nothing formal. Of course I had noticed his magnificent, brilliant eyes, his beautiful features and

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

majestic bearing, for these were parts of him that no circumstances could hide. But when I saw him for a few minutes standing on a platform surrounded by others, it flashed into my mind: "What a giant, what strength, what manliness, what a personality! Every one near him looks so insignificant compared with him." It came to me almost as a shock, it seemed to startle me. What was it that gave Swamiji this distinction? Was it his height? No, there were gentlemen there taller than he was. Was it his build? No, there were near him some very fine specimens of American manhood. It seemed to be more in the expression of the face than anything else. Was it his purity? What was it? I could not analyse it. I remembered what had been said of Lord Buddha,—“a lion amongst men.” I felt that Swamiji had unlimited power, that he could move heaven and earth if he willed it. This was my strongest and lasting impression of him.²

Swamiji seldom willed to use his power and never wished to impose his ideas upon the minds of others, as he so easily could. According to Swami Nikhilananda's book *Vivekananda: a Biography*, it was at one of Swamiji's class talks or lectures during this period in New York that, aware of his power, he suddenly stopped and left the room.

The meeting broke up [Swami Nikhilananda writes] and the people went away greatly disappointed. A friend asked him, when he was returning home, why he had cut short the lecture in that manner, just when both he and the audience were warming up. Had he forgotten his points? Had he become nervous? The Swami answered that at the meeting he had felt that he had too much power. He had noticed that the members of the audience were becoming so absorbed in his ideas that they were losing their own individualities. He had felt that they had become like soft clay and that he could give them

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

any shape he wanted. That, however, was contrary to his philosophy. He wished every man and woman to grow according to his or her own individuality. That was why he had had to stop.³

(Another account of what was presumably the same incident comes down to us in a roundabout way—through Mme Paul Verdier, who learned of it from Miss MacLeod, who had it from Alberta. According to this version, it had been Alberta who had asked him: “What happened, Swamiji? Why did you stop so suddenly?” And when he told her why, she objected, “But your audience will think you forgot what to say!” Characteristically, he replied, “What does it matter what they think?”)⁴

Disappointed and puzzled as the students may have been that evening, they saw and heard Swamiji on many other occasions during the two weeks he spent in New York. He often came to the Society’s headquarters; he held question-and-answer classes at the regular weekly meetings (Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and Saturday mornings); he came also at other times to talk informally to the enthralled students. Answering questions was no doubt the quickest, most direct way for him to uncover and solve any spiritual problems or philosophical difficulties the students might have. One of these difficulties—one that often cropped up in the West—was the cavalier attitude Vedanta seemed to take toward the matter of sin. In an article that appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata* of April 1918, Gurudasa recalled Swamiji’s reply to an objection of this sort:

[At Swamiji’s question classes] every one was invited to ask any question he wished. So one evening, an old church-lady asked him why he never spoke of sin. There came a look of surprise on Swamiji’s face. “But, madam,” he said, “blessed are my sins. Through sin I have learned virtue. It is my sins, as much as my virtues that have

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

made me what I am to-day. And now I am the preacher of virtue. Why do you dwell on the weak side of man's nature? Don't you know that the greatest blackguard often has some virtue that is wanting in the saint? There is only one power and that power manifests both as good and as evil. God and the devil are the same river with the water flowing in opposite directions."

The lady was horrified, but others understood. And then the Swami began to speak of the divinity that resides in every man; how the soul is perfect, eternal and immortal; the Atman resides in every being....

...Here was hope, here was strength, every man can become divine, by realising his own divinity. Do you see what an immense consolation Swamiji's teaching was to those that had searched but had not yet found, those who had knocked but unto whom it had not yet been opened? To them, Swamiji came as a Saviour. He came to the door of their own hearts and knocked. And blessed are they who opened the door to receive the flow of benediction that came with his presence.⁵

Another of Gurudasa's memories of this happy time is to be found in the same *Prabuddha Bharata* article. He had come to the Society one afternoon with a large picture of Jesus in his hand.

The Swami asked me what I had there. I told him that it was a picture of Christ talking to the rich young man. "Oh, let me see it," he said, eagerly. I handed him the picture. And never shall I forget the tenderness in his look when he held the picture and looked at it. At last he returned it to me, with the simple words: "How great was Jesus!" And I could not help thinking that there was something in common between these two souls.⁶

Swamiji's stay at Ridgely Manor had restored his health to

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

some extent, but, as Gurudasa noted, he was still far from being well.⁷ On November 9 or 10 he moved from the Leggetts' house to the Guernseys', for, as he wrote to Miss MacLeod, "the doctor wants to watch me and cure me." "The heart they all say is only nervous," he continued. "...[Dr. Guernsey] also advises me strongly to go on with doctor Helmer's treatment. He thinks Helmer will do me a world of good and that is what I need now. Is not he broad?"⁸ But despite Dr. Helmer's osteopathic treatments, which Swamiji commenced taking at once, and despite Dr. Guernsey's care, he developed a bad cold and fever. Not impossibly, the emotional shock of his encounter with "old Landsberg" contributed to this; it was also around this time that he received one of Mr. Sturdy's improbable letters. Incidents such as these told on his highly sensitive body. Indeed, better than any doctor, Swamiji knew how fine the body and nerves must be to carry and transmit currents of spirituality. Perhaps he was his own best diagnostician. "On the whole," he wrote to Sister Nivedita from New York, "I don't think there is any cause for anxiety about my body. This sort of nervous body is just the instrument to play great music at times and at times to moan in darkness."⁹

On November 12, sick in bed at Dr. Guernsey's (as one learns from Swami Abhedananda's diary), he wrote to Mrs. Bull. His letter, which has not heretofore been published, read in full:

180 W. 59
c/o E. Gurnsey Esq.
12th Nov

Dear Mrs Bull—

I am laid up with bad cold. The clothes are not ready—they will be next week. I don't know what my next step will be. Dr. Gurnsey is very kind—Several Doctors have examined me and none could detect any organic disease.

Even the kidney complications for the present have disappeared.

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

Well the whole thing is then dispepsia. I want ever so much to try battle creek food [renowned health foods manufactured at Battle Creek, Michigan]. There is a restaurant which cooks only battle creek food. Do you think it should be best for me to try it just now? If so I go to Detroit. In that case send me my terracotta thick cashmere coat.

Ever yours in the Lord
Vivekananda

Had three treatments already from Helmer. Going to take some next week. None can do anything for this "wind." That is why dieting should be tried at any cost.¹⁰
V.

Three days later Swamiji decided, somewhat reluctantly it would seem, to spend the winter at Mrs. Bull's home in Cambridge. "After all," he wrote to her on November 15, "I decide to come to Cambridge just now... only my fear is it will be for the whole winter a place for becoming nervous and not for quieting of nerves, with constant parties and lectures. Well, perhaps you can give me a room somewhere, where I can hide myself from all the goings on in the place. Again I am so nervous of going to a place where indirectly the Indian Math will be. [Her correspondence with Swami Saradananda kept Mrs. Bull in constant touch with Belur Math.] The very name of these Math people is enough to frighten me. And they are determined to kill with these letters etc... I am much better and am all right; nothing the matter with me except my worry, and now I am sure to throw that all overboard. Only one thing I want—and I am afraid I cannot get it of you—there should be no communication about me in your letters to India even indirect. I want to hide for a time or for all time."¹¹

Then suddenly the picture changed, and the future began, as it were, to take shape. Five days after writing the above, Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale (from "1 East 39 St."—then the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Union League Club): "I start tomorrow most probably for California."¹² That same day, November 20, Mrs. Bull came to New York. Three days later she returned to Cambridge, "bringing word," Dr. Lewis G. Janes noted in his meticulously kept Diary of the Cambridge Conferences, "that the Swami Vivekananda has been suddenly called to California, and cannot give the lecture on Shankaracharya, Dec. 10th."¹³ (The Cambridge Conferences was an annual course of lectures held at Mrs. Bull's house and directed by Dr. Janes. Swami Turiyananda was invited to speak in Swamiji's place.)

What lay behind Swamiji's sudden decision to go to California?—to make this move which was to prove so important to his mission, which indeed seems in retrospect to have been the primary, though long-unrevealed, purpose of his second visit to the Western world? One remembers his parting call to Miss MacLeod as she drove away from Ridgely Manor: "Get up some classes and I will come." But although she had remained in Los Angeles after the death of her brother on November 2 and had no doubt urged Swamiji to join her (she had found a new healer-of-all-ills), she had not, by November 20, arranged any classes for him. Nor do we find in his letters of this pre-California period that a wish to teach Vedanta in new fields had been a conscious factor in his decision to cross the continent. On the contrary, other motives seem to have been uppermost in his mind.

For one thing, his poor health made a visit to sunny California seem desirable, if not imperative. Secondly, there was his urgent need to find a haven remote from all agitating and unfruitful reminders of the problems connected with his Indian work. "It is necessary that I must disappear for some time," he wrote to Swami Brahmananda on the eve of his departure from New York. "Let not anyone write me or seek me during that time, it is absolutely necessary for my health. I am only nervous that is all, nothing more."¹⁴

He did not disappear from his brothers' sight without healing any wounds he may have inflicted over the past

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

months. "Never mind what I have said in previous harsh letters," he wrote. "They would do you good.... If these scoldings don't make you brave, I shall have no more hopes of you. I want to see you die even, but you must make a fight.... All blessings follow you. Never mind my harshness. You know the heart always, whatever the lips say. All blessings on you.... I am much better—well, in fact," he concluded. "Lord help you all. I am going to the Himalayas soon to retire for ever. My work is done."¹⁵

Swamiji spoke often and seriously of retiring; but his work, actually, was by no means done, nor had his concern for it lessened in the slightest. His hope that in some new place he could earn money for the Math and also, perhaps, interest people in contributing financially to his educational projects in India was as strong as ever, and it would not be wrong to say that this hope constituted the third, and not least, important motive for his trip to the West Coast. In this last respect one finds a certain parallelism between his first visit to the West and his visit now to California. His quest for funds with which to spread education among the Indian masses had been the dominant motive behind his first voyage. The same quest had been prominent among the motives bringing him to America the second time and, ultimately, taking him to the Pacific Coast. "My going over to the West again is uncertain," he had written in April of 1897 from Darjeeling. "If I go, know that too will be for India. Where is the strength of men in this country? Where the strength of money?...our well-being is impossible without men and money coming from the West."¹⁶

In 1899 the Math funds consisted of 30,000 rupees, from an original fund of 35,000 rupees donated by Mrs. Bull. (Swamiji had borrowed 5,000 rupees for a house for his mother—of which, as we have seen from his letter of August 6, he had been defrauded.) This sum, approximately 9,700 dollars, was invested in his name in Government Bonds, an investment, which though safe and sound, brought but a small income.¹⁷

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Swamiji hoped to earn at least 5,000 rupees (1,615 dollars) in order to restore the fund to its original figure; and he hoped also to collect eventually, perhaps in India, some 15,000 rupees (4,800 dollars), thus bringing the fund up to 50,000 and placing things, as he wrote, "on a better footing."¹⁸ But in addition to the overall financial needs of his Indian work, which were pressing enough, the Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order, was, as we have seen, facing a crisis. The legal battle that Swamiji was determined to wage against the municipality's persecutive assessment required extra money, as well as courage, and there can be little doubt that the matter was a source of worry to him. "Spare no pains or money for the law suit,"¹⁹ he had written from Ridgely Manor to his brother monks in an unpublished letter, dated October 13. And to Mrs. Bull he was to write from Los Angeles on December 12: "Well, the municipality is trying to tax us out—good; that is my fault as I did not make the Math public property by a deed of trust.... The present looks very gloomy indeed."²⁰

These, then, were the circumstances that took Swamiji to California: his poor health, his need for seclusion, and his hope to earn money for his Indian work. These factors, or motives, formed the wave, so to speak, upon which his mission to the Western world (begun in 1893) was now to be carried forward, completed, and made secure.

In his letter of November 15 to Mrs. Bull, Swamiji mentioned that he might visit Montclair, "for a few hours at least," before leaving New York.²¹ Montclair was a small town in New Jersey about twenty miles, or about an hour's journey, from Manhattan. Swami Saradananda had often held classes there in 1896 and 1897, living in the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler, the latter of whom was an ardent student of Vedanta. Since his arrival from Ridgely Manor at the end of October, Swami Turiyananda had been carrying on the Montclair work with much success, coming to the city only on Saturday

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

afternoons to hold a class for children and to talk and meditate with the New York students. Mrs. Wheeler had invited Swamiji to Montclair, but, to my knowledge, there is no record of whether or not he was able to accept. All we know is that, having bade good-bye to his brother monks, his disciples, and his friends, he left New York for Chicago on the morning of Wednesday, November 22.²²

6

In a sense, Chicago was Swamiji's home in the Western world. Here in late July of 1893 he had first set foot in the United States; here in September of the same year he had made his first appearance before the American public, becoming famous literally overnight; and here during almost all of 1894, when he had been lecturing throughout the eastern half of the United States, he had often returned, staying with the Hale family, which, as mentioned earlier, he loved as his own. It was in order to visit the Hales once again and to see his many other friends that he now stopped off in Chicago for a week.

Almost certainly Mary herself met Swamiji's train on the morning of Thursday, November 23, and took him to her flat at 52 Walton Place, where she and her cousins, Isabelle and Harriet McKindley, had lived since the summer of 1896. (In that year Mr. and Mrs. George Hale had gone abroad, leasing their house at 415 Dearborn Avenue, a move that marked the end, as it were, of an era: the Hale-McKindley family were never again to come together under the same roof. On their return to Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Hale moved into a comfortable hotel-apartment, continuing to lease their house; Mary and the McKindley sisters were happy in their flat. Sam Hale was off in the Klondike in the far north, searching, along with thousands of others, for gold; Harriet Hale was married to Clarence Woolley and lived in a new apartment building at 10 Aster Street; and thus the Hale house,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

where Swamiji had so often stayed during his first visit to the West, no longer rang with the life of a big family, nor did it have a room waiting for him.)¹ It is almost certain that Swamiji stayed at the Walton Place flat during his present short visit in Chicago. The flat was fairly large, accommodating in its second parlor two pianos, at which Mary Hale and her sister Harriet, both excellent pianists, often played duets.

According to Sister Nivedita's diary, Mary Hale gave a party for Swamiji on the afternoon following his arrival. Nivedita did not note how large the party was or who the guests were, but no doubt a number of his friends were invited to greet him. He knew, of course, many people in Chicago—certainly a great many more than we know of, for only a few names have come down to us. There were Mrs. Milward (Florence) Adams, who, as we have seen, had paid a visit to Ridgely Manor; Miss Josephine Locke, Director of Art in the city's public schools; a Mrs. Peake, a teacher of metaphysics; Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lyon, with whom he had stayed during the Parliament of Religions in 1893, and their daughter Mrs. Conger. There were a Miss Howe, a Cora Stockham, a Mrs. Mills. From one of Sister Nivedita's letters to Mary Hale, one learns also of "the Barberts," on whom Swamiji called, "saying on the doorstep—'I'm the gentleman from Georgia.'"²

Undoubtedly, some of Swamiji's friends entertained him, inviting him to dinner, lunch, or tea; but he also spent quiet times at Walton Place, Mary Hale guarding his privacy. Nivedita sometimes called. "I am down for another talk [at Hull House]... on Indian Arts and Crafts, of which I know nothing—as I told them," she wrote on Saturday, November 25, to "Aunt Mary." "So I am going to ask if I may come to you on Sunday evening and ask Swami some questions on the subject.... I am sure Swami will be ready to help me—if you ask him. And he knows a great deal really."³ Presumably, Nivedita was allowed to come and ask her questions of Swamiji, for her lecture at Hull House, it turned out, was a success.

Swamiji made a number of recordings at the Walton Place

flat during this period, talking into a big horn that flared from one of Edison's phonograph machines. This knowledge I have had from Mrs. Herbert E. Hyde, who was thirteen years old in 1899, the daughter of a third McKindley sister, Mary (Mrs. Leonard Baker). The little girl, Louise Baker, had often visited her aunts at Walton Place when Swamiji was there. "Of course," she told me, "he was generally shut up in a room by himself when he was lecturing into the machine. But once I saw him while he was doing it. I remember the black recording thing. It was very primitive." (Mrs. Hyde also remembered Swamiji's beautiful voice and how very handsome he was. "And his eyes!" she said. "He had luminous eyes. I'll never forget.") What became of the cylinders (or disks) that bore the impress of Swamiji's voice no one, it would seem, knows. And indeed, unless a permanent matrix was taken of them, they would surely have long since deteriorated, being made, as was customary, of a waxy substance not meant to last.

Swamiji not only lectured into a horn at 52 Walton Place; on Monday afternoon, November 27, he there lectured to a live audience. Unfortunately, nothing is known at present of what he said, of what his subject was, of how long he spoke, of how many people attended. One does know, however, that this was an invitational parlor talk, for one finds Sister Nivedita pleading with "Aunt Mary" for a certain Miss Starr, who evidently was in disrepute. "Once more I am going to beg to be allowed to bring Miss Starr on Monday," she wrote. "You heard her little speech the other night—yet already she is beginning to be one of us, and is hungry to come. *Do* let me bring her! We can sit in a corner out of sight. . . . I love her so much—she is full of the true something, and a new face is often as stimulating to Swami as to others." ("The fun of it is in Miss Starr's case," Nivedita continued in an interesting passage, "that Swami really hurt her in her own house, and that all I said in excuse or explanation was that I knew he never made mistakes—and that that was

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

best for her when it happened and greater of him than suavity—for it showed his entire indifference to the opinion of the world. It was on this strong doctrine that she got over her little hurt! On this, and the doctrine that in dealing with him we have to forget that we are anything but a soul asking for truth.”)⁴ Whether or not Miss Starr was permitted to hear Swamiji, even from a corner, is not on record.

Among the people Swamiji was happy to see was Mme Emma Calvé, the famous singer, whom he had met in Chicago several years earlier and who, as it happened, was again in town with the Metropolitan Opera Company. On the afternoon of November 28 she came to call. “She is a great woman,” Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Leggett, who knew her. “I wish I saw more of her. It is a grand sight to see a giant pine struggling against a cyclone. Is it not?”⁵ (This was evidently one of the more stormy periods in Mme Calvé’s life. Swamiji’s wish, incidentally, came true; he was to see a good deal more of Emma Calvé before his visit to the Western world was over.)

On Thanksgiving Day, November 30, he finished packing all his things into a new trunk. Mrs. Bull, returning to Cambridge from New York, where possibly she had helped Swamiji pack, had written to Mary Hale: “I hope that Swami is safe with his friends in Chicago.... His trunk will just about last him there. If you can procure him one a little larger that will bear knocking about, & be strong enough to permit his taking some books, will you kindly speak to him about it, & attend to it?”⁶ As one learns from the following heretofore unpublished letter from Swamiji to Mrs. Bull, Mary Hale did indeed attend to it:

Chicago
the 30th Nov ’99

My dear Dhira Mata—

I am going to leave this place to-night. They have given me a new trunk a big one. The *Maspero* [Sir Gaston Maspero, a French Egyptologist and archeologist] book

RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

is with me, only the second volume. The first volume must be at Boston. Kindly send it c/o Joe.

They have been very kind. Madame Calvé came to see me day before yesterday. She is a great woman.

I have nothing to write here except that Margo is doing very well, except some people were complaining last night that she frightened them with her assertion that Swami can not make mistakes!!!

Hope things are going on with you very well. This is in haste. I write in length from California.

Ever your son⁷

Vivekananda

My love to Mrs Vaughn

So came to a close Swamiji's five months of rest. That evening he boarded the train (very likely the Santa Fe's crack *California Express*) that would take him directly and with the greatest possible speed to Los Angeles, the city where a new chapter of his mission was to begin.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A NEW MISSION BEGINS

1

At the turn of the century, Los Angeles bore almost no resemblance to the huge, sprawling metropolis of today. In 1900 the city's population, which had doubled during the previous ten years, stood, momentarily, at 102,500; its area was a mere fraction of its present vastness; the Los Angeles River supplied enough water for all its needs; many of its streets were still unpaved, tree-lined roads that became mudholes when it rained; its downtown buildings were small and unprepossessing, and while a few grandiose mansions adorned the city here and there, its late-Victorian residences were, on the whole, undistinguished. Despite its romantic Spanish and Mexican past, Los Angeles resembled in many respects a typical mid-western town, thriving incongruously amidst pepper trees and eucalyptus, orange groves and palms. Since the 1880s, and even earlier, midwesterners had poured by the trainload into this well-advertised paradise, where flowers bloomed in abundance throughout the year and blizzards were unknown. For the most part, the newcomers were prosperous and hardy farmers who, though tired of battling the elements in their native states, were by no means tired of life or of themselves. They were not people to be absorbed into a sleepy Mexican pueblo; on the contrary, they had put their own stamp on the little town and in short order had converted it into a prosperous, fully American, predominantly Republican and Protestant city. They had introduced electric car lines, electric lights, water mains, and sewers. They thought of ways and means

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

to grow and to improve; they were, in fact, already urging their adopted town, which at the close of the nineteenth century ranked twenty-sixth among American cities, to catch up in economic and cultural status to the urbane, self-assured San Francisco, which ranked ninth.

But though seething internally with ambition, Los Angeles was to all outward appearances still a quiet, peaceful, and compact town. In one residential section, it is true, oil wells were fast ruining the lawns and gardens; but this was a limited disturbance. One could still bask in the city's sunshine, fill one's lungs with its clean and fragrant air, and walk into outlying farmlands. The start of the motion-picture industry was some ten years in the future; Hollywood was an uneventful village of five hundred devout and temperate Methodists; paved highways did not exist, and the automobile, a rarity, was still looked upon askance as "an expensive luxury... well named the 'devil-wagon.' "

In the early afternoon of December 3 Swamiji arrived in this Eden of America. It was a sunny day with only a few clouds scattered in the sky. The temperature was in the sixties and the breeze was gentle. There can be little doubt that Josephine MacLeod met him at the railway depot and that she took him, not to Mrs. Blodgett's, as has heretofore been supposed, but to the home of a Miss Spencer. "Swami & I are to spend the first week with Miss Spencer, who has spent the last 10 years in nursing a dying mother," Miss MacLeod had written to Mrs. Bull on November 26 and had added, "After that we will come to stay with Mrs Blodgett."¹

Miss MacLeod did not say just who Miss Spencer was, just where she lived, or why she and Swamiji visited her during his first week in Los Angeles, and none of our other currently available sources of information answer these questions. But that Swamiji did stay with Miss Spencer and her mother at some time during his Los Angeles visit has long been known. "At Los Angeles he was for a time the guest of Miss Spencer, who became one of his fervent disciples," a passage in the *Life of*

Swami Vivekananda reads. "While there, he was wont to sit on the floor beside her aged mother who was blind and nearing the end. At Miss Spencer's question, why he seemed so interested in her mother, he told her that death like birth was a mystery, and so the mother was an interesting study to him."²

This somewhat dreary picture of Swamiji sitting beside the chair of an aged lady, observing with absorption the slow receding of life, constitutes our only glimpse of him during his first four or five days in southern California, but all in all this seems to have been a gloomy time. "Your sixth arrived, but with it yet no change in my fortune," he wrote on December 6 to Sister Nivedita, who had prophesied great happenings and beginnings for that date. ("The Day," she had written in anticipation in her diary.) "Would change be any good, you think?" Swamiji continued. "Some people are made that way, to love being miserable. If I did not break my heart over people I was born amongst, I would do it for somebody else. I am sure of that."³

But during these days Swamiji surely did other things besides sitting with the aged Mrs. Spencer. Miss MacLeod, for instance, must have introduced him to her newly made friends, who had been eagerly looking forward to his arrival in their city. "I was invited to meet a dozen people at Judge Cheney's [judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court from 1885 to 1891] to tell them about India!" she had written on November 26 to Mrs. Bull. "But they were all so keen on Swami's coming—that he became the pivot."⁴ Indeed, so keen on Swamiji's coming were Judge Cheney's guests that one of them, Mr. Bernhard R. Baumgardt, set himself to making arrangements for his first lecture in the city, engaging for the purpose Blanchard Hall—"the best in town."

Mr. Baumgardt, who was to become one of Swamiji's ardent admirers, was in the printing business and was himself a master printer. But printing was merely the breadwinning part of his life. In addition, he was an expert seaman, a mathematician, an astronomer, a connoisseur in music, art, literature, a linguist

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

of rare attainments, fluently speaking nine languages, and a lecturer of marked ability. Born in England in 1862 and educated in Sweden where he graduated from Strengnas College, he had come to America in the 1880s. In 1892 he had been secretary of the Oregon Academy of Sciences and at the time of our story was secretary of the Southern California Academy of Sciences and chairman of the Academy's Astronomy and Mathematics Section. This excellent young man helped to arrange not only Swamiji's first lecture in Los Angeles, but, as we shall see, his second lecture as well, which was held before the Academy. Nor was Mr. Baumgardt the only member of his family drawn to Swamiji: his wife, as I have learned from her daughter-in-law, became deeply interested in his teachings—even more so than Mr. Baumgardt himself.

"Various gentlemen are interested," Miss MacLeod had written to Sister Nivedita in regard to the plans being made for Swamiji, "*so I do nothing*. In fact, I shall always try to be in the background—though necessarily I must vouch for the Prophet, as I am the one who knows him."⁵ But while Miss MacLeod may have been the only person in Los Angeles who knew Swamiji personally, the name of Swami Vivekananda was by no means unknown in that city. News of his appearance at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 had inevitably reached southern California, either through Californians who had themselves attended the Parliament or through letters from the Midwest telling in alarm or in jubilation of the extraordinary young Hindu who had burst upon the religious scene with galvanizing effect. "All the ideas the Californians have of me emanated from Chicago,"⁶ Miss MacLeod was later to quote Swamiji as having said. His subsequent lecture tour had also surely come to the notice of the people on the Pacific Coast; nor were his later teachings unknown to them. His books, first published in 1896, had reached California and, as he was to find, "did indeed great service on this coast."⁷ Thus many were those who had looked forward to his arrival with informed interest and no little excitement—attitudes that were

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

reflected in the following article, which appeared December 2 in the *Capital*, a Los Angeles weekly, accompanied by a photograph captioned "Swami Vivekananda Who Will Lecture at Blanchard Hall Next Friday Evening."

A PRINCE FROM INDIA

LOS ANGELES is to be royally favored, in a very short time, in the visit of Swami Vivekananda to this city. He is in very truth, an Indian Prince—Prince in intellect, in knowledge and in that strange realm we vaguely call spiritual. There will be lectures presumably, and other mediums through which the men and women of the extreme Western city may drink from the fountain of the Eastern Seer's rare mind. Swami Vivekananda has awakened the interest of a number of the most prominent society people—men and women of culture in Los Angeles. If he does not provide a new sensation under the sun then there is nothing in indications.

Swami Vivekananda is the red-coated Indian monk who spoke at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Unlike other wise men from the East he comes not to salute the rising of an Occidental luminary, but to scatter amongst younger peoples the long-garnered lore of his own race.

A great scholar pointed out the other day the curious effect that the discovery of Sanscrit had had on the imagination of Indo-European nations. From the day that Sir William Jones found that it was easier to translate a Sanscrit play (sakoontalaly kalidas) [Sakuntala by Kalidasa] into Latin first and then into English, till now, there has been a steady growth of the feeling that Hindu, Persian, Greek, Roman and Teuton are one in blood. We are all Aryan. Roman law, British power, Greek literature, Persian arts, and Indian wisdom are all branches that have been acquired by various members of the family for the

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

common good. None of them ever die. They may seem to be dead. They only bide their time, like the statues in the museum, till the hour strikes in their hearing, and they may step down from their pedestals warm with life.

For the most part, it is the scholar that bids a latent culture speak. It is the great savants that translate Plato, and are critical of Persian poets, and treat of the relation of Roman law to modern life.

But India appears to be an exception. Such are the social customs of that curious country, and such is the tenacity of the national character, that no science or scheme of things once formulated there seems ever to be lost. Now this is very strange indeed, when we think of it. Who of us cares to acquaint himself with mediaeval alchemy? Yet in Benares—the Rome of Asia, as it has been called—exist learned men whose pride it is today that they are competent to restore all the intricate instruments of an old-time observatory. And so it may well seem absurd to the grave Eastern mind that we should be training students and paying professors to drink deep into the Sanscrit lore of life as if it were a branch of antiquity, when it is actually a living philosophy of conduct, an active discipline, a stern ideal of daily living at this moment in India, the country of its birth.

For it is too late in the day to doubt that the Indian wisdom has really existed, or that it was indeed, wisdom. Schopenhauer, Emerson, Burnouf, Deussen and Max Muller would all have lived in vain if we could question this fact. But after all the scholar can give little but dry bones! Emerson—of this list—comes nearest to being a living voice. Edwin Arnold, in his *Light of Asia*, unlike the grave persons of the libraries, touches the emotional note, and we know how we respond!

These are the interpreters that we desire. And such, it is said, is Mr. Swami Vivekananda. Those who saw him at the World's Fair in 1893, speak of him as a young

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

man, thirty or thereabouts, a born orator, who seemed charged with the Philosophy of the Vedanta. Apparently he was deeply versed in Sanscrit itself; then he had sat long, as it seemed, at the feet of great sages, and finally he had wandered on foot over thousands of miles of his own country watching every manifestation of religious feeling and observance and acquiring that deep insight into human experience which is all-important to the religious teacher.

Six years have come and gone, however, since the World's Fair and it is reasonable to assume that the Swami's strange personality has undergone some changes in those years. For one thing, he has in the interval seen many new countries and completed the circuit of the globe.

Is he as Oriental as ever in his ideas? Or has he become somewhat cosmopolitan? It will be interesting to hear what this vigorous mind has carried away from our Western World. Above all, we shall be glad to have an opportunity of comparing the importance of the grand Occidental motive—the Perfecting of Life—as it stands related in his mind to the Eastern motive—Freedom and Renunciation. It is a strange element to come into our modern world—a man who has lived the life of wisdom in forests and mountains, and who, nevertheless, is able to cope with our manners and customs, with our sentiments and interests, like one of the rest of us.

He was the first monk to brave [leave?] India's shores on a mission of evangelization to the rest of the world—and his country received him back with acclaim. Religion rules everything there, and the papers of the day told how one of the richest of Indian Princes—the Maharajah of Ramnad—knelt at the monk's feet as he landed once more on his soil; how six or eight ruling sovereigns were proud to draw the carriage that contained him; and how the people of Madras gave him an ovation not equalled even on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

His journey through his own country in the year 1897—judging from a little book published by the Christian Literature Society of Madras—was a triumphal progress from beginning to end. It is evident that the religious preacher of the palm-land is an uncrowned king.

Swamiji's first lecture in Los Angeles was scheduled for December 8. From December 3 up until the morning of the event the Los Angeles newspapers ran daily announcements similar to the following, which appeared in the *Los Angeles Record*:

Lecture by Swami Vivekananda of Bombay, India, representative of the Hindu Religion at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago, 1893. Subject: Vedanta Philosophy, or Hinduism as a Religion. Blanchard Hall, 233 South Broadway, Friday Evening, December 8, at 8 o'clock.

Admission, 50c. Tickets for sale at Fitzgeralds, 113 S. Spring Street.

On the morning of the lecture, the *Los Angeles Herald* printed, in addition to an announcement, a more formal introduction:

A Hindu Lecturer

Swami Vivekananda, a member of the most ancient order of Hindu monks, will lecture this evening at Blanchard hall on "The Vedanta Philosophy or Hinduism as a Religion." Swami Vivekananda represented the Hindus at the World's Fair in 1893, since which time he has lectured on various phases of religion in this country and in Europe, drawing many most interested listeners to his expositions of the Hindu philosophy. He is [was to have been] one of the lecturers this winter on the program of the Cambridge conference, and has also lectured before the Graduate Philosophical society of Harvard university.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

The lecture this evening will present a general survey of the fundamental principles underlying eastern religions and philosophical thought.

The Blanchard Building was situated in the heart of town, opposite the City Hall, and like the Carnegie Building in New York, though on a considerably smaller scale, was "devoted to Music and Art." The auditorium held eight hundred people—a sizable hall for a philosophical lecture, considering the fifty-cent admission. Yet from the account of one who was present we learn that the lecture was attended by more than six hundred people, all of whom were "enchanted." And when Swamiji spoke, another who was present tells us, one could hear a pin drop, so spellbound was the audience.

Happily, both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Herald* published fairly good reports of Swami Vivekananda's first public lecture in California, and since they are, as far as we know, the only existing accounts of this talk and since neither has been heretofore reprinted in whole or in part, both are given below in their entirety. The *Times* article, the better of the two, read as follows:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Lectures on Hindoo religion and philosophy.

Toleration, brotherhood, and Nirvana his themes—
difference between Eastern and Western civilization.
The latter desires the continuation of individuality.

Hindoo philosophy is a difficult subject, and that fact doubtless accounts for the moderate size of the audience that came together, last evening, to listen to Swami Vivekananda. R. B. [B. R.] Baumgardt introduced the speaker as the apostle of toleration and a representative of the oldest religion in the world. The well-known expositor

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

of the Hindoo philosophy, dressed in the yellow robe of the Brahmin caste, spoke in part as follows:

"I come before you, ladies and gentlemen, to bring no new religion. I desire simply to tell you a few points that bind together all religions. I shall touch upon some things in the thought of eastern civilization that will appear strange to you and on others that I hope will appeal to you. All the religions of the world have a backbone of unity. This is the principle of philosophy and of toleration.

"Very few people in this country understand what India is. It is a country half as large as the United States and containing 300,000,000 people, speaking a number of different tongues, but all bound together by the ideas of a common religion. By these ideas the Hindoos have made their influence felt through the ages, working gently, silently, patiently, while western civilization has been conquering by force of arms. The future will show which is the more powerful—physical force or the power of ideas. The arts and sciences of the Hindoos have found their way over all the earth—their numerals, their mathematical thought, their ethics. Was it not in India, there and there alone, that the doctrine of love was first preached, and not alone the doctrine of love of one's fellow-men, but of love of every living thing, yea, even of the meanest worm that crawls under our feet. When you begin to study the arts and institutions of India, you become magnetized, fascinated. You cannot get away.

"In India, as elsewhere, we find the earliest condition one of division into little tribes. These different tribes had each its different god, its different ceremonial. But in coming in contact with one another, the tribes did not follow the course that western civilization has taken—they did not persecute each other because of these differences, but endeavored to find the germs of common ideas in all the religions. And from this endeavor arose

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

the habit of toleration which is the keynote of the Indian religion. Truth is one, can be but one, though it may be expressed in different language.

“Another great difference between eastern and western religion lies in the reception of a philosophical and scientific view of the universe. In the West, agnosticism has been growing in late years, and with the loss of a hope in individual immortality, which the westerner is always desiring and seeking, a note of despair has crept into western thought. Ages ago, the Hindoo realized that the universe was one of law, and that, under law, all change. Therefore, an imperishable individuality is an impossibility. But this thought is not one of despair to the Hindoo. On the contrary—and this is what the westerner can least understand of eastern thought—he longs for freedom, for release from the thralldom of the senses, from the thralldom of pain and the thralldom of pleasure.

“Western civilization has sought a personal God and despaired at the loss of belief in such. The Hindoo, too, has sought. But God cannot be known to the external senses. The Infinite, the Absolute, cannot be grasped. Yet although it eludes us, we may not infer its non-existence. It exists. What is it that cannot be seen by the outward eye? The eye itself. It may behold all other things, but itself it cannot mirror. This, then, is the solution. If God may not be found by the outer senses, turn your eye inward and find, in yourself, the soul of all souls. Man himself is the All. I cannot know the fundamental reality, because I am that fundamental reality. There is no duality. This is the solution of all questions of metaphysics and ethics. Western civilization has in vain endeavored to find a reason for altruism. Here it is. I am my brother, and his pain is mine. I cannot injure him without injuring myself, or do ill to other beings without bringing that ill upon my own soul. When I

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

have realized that I myself am the Absolute, for me there is no more death nor life nor pain nor pleasure, nor caste nor sex. How can that which is absolute die or be born? The pages of nature are turned before us like the pages of a book, and we think that we ourselves are turning, while in reality we remain ever the same."

The report of this lecture in the *Los Angeles Herald* was considerably more sketchy than the above; it contains, however, some additional impressions that one is glad to have, such as the comparison between Swamiji's Sanskrit and the rippling Latin of Horace:

THE SWAMI ON THE VEDAS

A Brahmin Philosopher Delivers an Interesting Lecture

Swami Vivekananda, a member of the most ancient order of Hindoos, lectured last night in Blanchard hall before a most appreciative audience. The lecturer was introduced by B. R. Baumgardt, who said his introduction was in a double sense a pleasure in that first the Swami came to enlighten us on the Vedas, and second as an apostle of toleration and respect for other people's religions and philosophic views, in which respect the West has much to learn from the East.

Swami Vivekananda wore the yellow robe of the highest cult of the Brahmins and presented a most picturesque figure.

In commencing his lecture he gave a brief description of the past and present conditions of his people, the political divisions of the country and their common tie in the Brahmin religion. He gave a graphic description of the wonderful civilization which has existed in that peninsula for more than 7,000 years.

India, the Swami said, is the mother of all civilization

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and Hinduism the mother of all religion. In this country the lowest castes are perfectly familiar with metaphysical concepts which are only taken up by the cultured class in the West.

In the Hindu religion man is not only a part of God but he is God, and the reason that God cannot be seen or understood is because man cannot see himself. The eye can see objectively, but cannot see itself. The lecturer said in Sanscrit numerous passages from the Vedas which he subsequently translated into English. The rhythm and beauty of the language as it fell from his lips could only be compared to the ripple in the poetry of Horace. It was a revelation to many to hear [that] the transcendental ideas which have only recently become known in the western world have been taught in the Vedas for thousands of years.

The Hindu religion, as presented by the Swami is a religion of love for man, love for all men, love for all animals, love for everything that has life. This doctrine has had a wonderful effect upon the inhabitants of India. It has taught them that they cannot injure anything living without injuring themselves, without injuring the whole world. Perhaps the grandest conception which the speaker presented from the Vedas, may be summed up as follows: That change, constant change, is the rule of the universe, transformation following transformation without beginning, without end. If one could attain to a glimpse of the whole of nature, could gain a philosophical prospect of the whole cosmos as a whole, then he would know no change, for all change would be comprised within the whole.

The Swami will lecture before the academy of sciences Tuesday evening, the 12th instant, upon the subject of "Cosmos."

Sitting enthralled in the audience at Blanchard Hall were

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

three women who were to play an important part in Swamiji's life in California. They were the Mead sisters of South Pasadena: Mrs. Carrie Mead Wyckoff, Mrs. Alice Mead Hansbrough, and Miss Helen Mead. The closeness of the friendship that was to grow between these sisters and Swamiji is well known to everyone familiar with the history of his life; but the exact date of their first meeting has heretofore been obscure. The story is told in Mrs. Hansbrough's unpublished "Reminiscences" (of which more later). It happened like this:

On the day of Swamiji's first lecture, Helen Mead, the youngest of the sisters, had come upon its announcement in the Los Angeles papers. Returning home from work late that afternoon, she had excitedly relayed the news to Mrs. Hansbrough, well knowing that her sister would be electrified by it. And electrified she was; for the teachings of Swami Vivekananda had already captured Mrs. Hansbrough's mind. For more than two years—during an ocean voyage and a long sojourn in Alaska—she had pored over two of his books, *Raja Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*, which, at her request, had been given to her in San Francisco as going-away presents. Reading them again and again, she had pondered over the greatness of their message and the evident greatness of their author. "I used to read for a while," she related many years later, "and the thought would come to me, 'What marvelous thoughts these are!' I would hold the place with my finger, close the book and shut my eyes and think, 'What a wonderful man he must be who wrote these words!' And I would try to form a picture in my mind of what he looked like.... I had never expected to see him."⁸ Yet less than two weeks after Mrs. Hansbrough's return from her travels Swami Vivekananda arrived in southern California.

On the memorable evening of December 8, when he was to speak at Blanchard Hall, the Mead sisters (she related) "rushed through dinner, made up a party and went in to Los Angeles." Needless to say, Mrs. Hansbrough was by no means disappointed in Swamiji. "I got the same impression I had

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

previously had of him," she later said; "that is, he was a most impressive personality....He wore a light orange robe and turban; his complexion [for a Hindu] was light. His hair was black—very black—with not a trace of gray. His voice was the most musical I have ever heard. I should say he was a baritone—certainly nearer to bass than tenor. At the end of his lecture he closed with the chant: 'I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute.'...Whenever he quoted from Sanskrit he would chant, and then he would translate. Once later on, he apologized for quoting first in Sanskrit and explained that he still thought in that language."⁹

After the lecture was over a number of people gathered on the platform, among them the Mead sisters. It was not then, however, that Mrs. Hansbrough met Swamiji. Rather, she sought out her friend Mr. Baumgardt to ask him when and where the Swami was to speak again. He introduced her to Miss MacLeod, who, on learning of her interest in Swamiji's teachings, asked her to call on him at the home of Mrs. Blodgett. A date for the meeting was set: December 13.

But before continuing with our narrative it will not be amiss to tell how Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences" came into existence. In the spring of 1941 she was living in San Francisco with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cohn, and attending the lectures at the Vedanta Society of Northern California. Knowing of her close association with Swamiji in 1900, Swami Ashokananda, who was in charge of the Society, one day asked her if she would tell him her memories of those early days fully and in detail. Mrs. Hansbrough readily agreed, and a meeting was arranged at which a third person, equipped with pen and paper, was to be present. The first reminiscing interview took place at Mrs. Hansbrough's home on a March evening in 1941, and at that meeting it soon became clear that one session could not do justice to her richly stored memory. Thus four or five subsequent interviews took place, not at Mrs. Hansbrough's home, but during long Sunday drives through Golden Gate Park and

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

along San Francisco's ocean front. At all of these sessions Mr. Alfred T. Clifton (now Swami Chidrupananda) was present, taking down everything that was said. Transcribed, his notes run to some seventy-seven typed pages and constitute the "Reminiscences."

Although Mrs. Hansbrough was not young at the time of these meetings, her memory was extraordinarily accurate. Many of the dates, names, and events which she recalled after more than forty years coincide in almost every instance with those given in the Los Angeles newspapers and in other contemporary records. There was no confusion in her mind as to what happened when. Nor was she vague and self-contradictory as to the way in which events occurred. Often, as a means of checking, Swami Ashokananda would ask questions pertaining to an event Mrs. Hansbrough had already related. Her answers would confirm in every case the story previously told: the same colorful details would be given, the same clear picture disclosed; thus we can, I think, feel assured of the reliability of her memory. These "Reminiscences" have been made available to me by the Vedanta Society of Northern California, and I shall draw upon them freely throughout this account of Swamiji's life in California, to which let us now return.

Swamiji delivered his second lecture in Los Angeles on the evening of Tuesday, December 12, at the regular monthly meeting of the Southern California Academy of Sciences. The Academy had wisely chosen a larger than usual meeting place for the occasion and, fittingly, had chosen a church—Unity Church, situated about a block west of Blanchard Hall. In the *Los Angeles Herald* of December 10 an announcement of the lecture read as follows:

Another lecture by the Swami.

The next regular monthly meeting of the Southern California Academy of Sciences will take place next

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST.

Tuesday evening when a lecture will be delivered on "The Kosmos; or the Veda Conception of the Universe", by Swami Vivekananda, the representative of the Hindu religion at the world's parliament of religions, Chicago, 1893. The usual meeting place of the academy being too small to accommodate the audience on this occasion it has been decided to hold the meeting at Unity church, corner of Third and Hill streets.

Members are advised to be present at 8 o'clock. All the lectures of the academy are open to the public and are free.

A somewhat different version of the above appeared in the same paper two days later:

The learned Hindoo, Swami Vivekananda, will deliver a lecture at Unity church this evening under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences. Subject: "The Kosmos from the standpoint of the Ancient Vedas." The distinguished lecturer has appeared before large audiences in eastern cities and has addressed the faculty of Harvard college on three occasions. Vivekananda represented the religions of 300,000,000 people in India at the world's Congress of religions in 1893. The lecture at Unity church will be free.

Just as the newspaper reports are all we have of Swamiji's first lecture in Los Angeles, so the following accounts from the *Los Angeles Herald* and the *Times* of December 13 are, as far as is known, all we have of his second lecture. They are reprinted here for the first time and in full. First the *Herald*:

CONCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSE

Swami Vivekananda's lecture before
the Academy of Sciences

Unity church was filled last evening with a large

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

audience to hear the Swami Vivekananda, a native of India, lecture on the kosmos, or the Veda conception of the universe under the auspices of the Southern California Academy of Sciences. Abbot Kinney [president of the Academy] presided and introduced the speaker. The Swami wore the yellow robe and turban of the Hindu monk, in which he appeared at a previous lecture, and, with his well-rounded physique, clear dark skin and finely chiseled features, was a perfect facsimile of a brown bisque figure.

In introducing his subject the speaker reviewed the mythology of the flood, which among the Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians and other races is similar to the story of the Hebrew scriptures, showing that all held a similar belief concerning the creation of the universe.

"In the worship of the sun and the forces of nature," he said, "we see the attempts of ancient peoples to explain the mysteries surrounding them. Man's first idea of force was himself. When a stone fell he saw no force in it but the will behind it, and he conceived the idea that the whole universe was moved by force of wills. Gradually these wills became one, and science begins to rise. Gods begin to vanish, and in their place comes oneness, and now God is in danger of being dethroned by modern science. Science wants to explain things by their own nature and make the universe self-sufficient.

"Wills gradually began to disappear, and in their place comes will. This was the process of development in all the nations of the world, and so it was in India. Their ideas and gods were pretty much the same as those of other lands, only in India they did not stop there. They learned that life alone can produce life, and that death can never produce life. In our speculations about God we have got to monotheism. Everywhere else speculation stops there; we make it the be all and end all of everything, but in India it does not stop there. A gigantic will can not

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

explain all this phenomena we see around us. Even in man there is something back of the will. In so common sense a thing as the circulation of the blood, we find will is not the motive power.

"We have conceived God as a person like ourselves, only infinitely greater, and because there is goodness and mercy and happiness in the world there must be a being possessing these attributes, but there is also evil. The Hindu mind is too philosophical to admit the existence of two gods, one good and one bad. India remained true to the idea of unity. What is evil to me may be good to someone else; what is good to me may be evil to others. We are all links in a chain. Hence comes the speculation of the Upanishads, the religion of 300,000,000 of the human race. Nature is a unit; unity is in all existence, and God is the same as nature. This is one of the Indian speculations known to all the world outside of India.

"There is not a system of religion or philosophy in the world that does not show the influence of India's speculation, even to the Catholic church. The conservation of energy, considered a new discovery, has been known there by the name of father [was not Swamiji's word *prana*, "cosmic energy", rather than *father*?]. Whatever is comes from the father. Brahma [Prana?] must energize on something, and that they say is an invisible ether. Brahma vibrating on ether, the solid, the liquid, the luminous, it is all the same ether. The potentiality of everything is there. In the beginning of the next period Brahma will begin to vibrate more and more.

"Thus this speculation of India's scriptures is very similar to modern science. The same idea is taken up by modern evolution. Even our bodies, different only in dignity, are links in the same chain. In one individual the possibilities of every other individual are there. The living entity contains the possibility of all life, but can only express that which environment demands. The most

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

wonderful speculations are formed in modern science. The one that interests me as a preacher of religion is the oneness of all religions [life?]. When Herbert Spencer's voice says that the same life welling up in the plant is the life welling up in the individual, the Indian religion has found a voice in the nineteenth century."

The *Los Angeles Times* was more brief:

HINDU PHILOSOPHY

CONCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSE IN DISTANT INDIA.

Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu philosopher, addressed the regular monthly meeting of the Southern California Academy of Sciences at Unity Church last evening. The audience was large and appreciative, and at the end of the lecture a number of questions were asked by members of the audience and answered by the lecturer.

B. R. Baumgardt introduced the speaker, whose subject was "The Kosmos; or the Veda Conception of the Universe."

The speaker began with a reference to the mythological tales of the Hindus in which they attempted to explain the origin of the universe, and he told also of the endeavors of the ancients to explain the mysteries which surrounded them.

According to their belief, he said, man's first idea is of himself. His will moves all his members. A child's idea of power is in its will. All movement of the universe has a will behind it. The Hindus believe, said the speaker, that there is but one God, and he a person like the rest of them, but infinitely greater. Their mind is philosophical enough not to admit the existence of two gods, one bad and one good. With them nature is a unit, unity

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in all existence is the universe, and God is the same as nature.

"There is not a system of philosophy," said the speaker, "from that of the ancient Egyptians down to that of the Roman Catholic Church, which does not show traces of the same thought. All forces that exist in the mental and physical world have been resolved, in India, into the one word 'Father' ['prana'?). Whatever is, has been projected by Him."

In closing, the philosopher said that the ancient voice of India had found an echo in the 19th century in the writings of Herbert Spencer.

(Although the above reports are valuable inasmuch as they give a general idea of the nature of Swamiji's lecture and of the points he emphasized, it is clear that they contain many gaps, and the reader who cares to know more of what he may have said would do well to turn to his lectures on "The Cosmos," delivered in New York in 1896 and published in *Jnana Yoga*. Here Swamiji gave a clear exposition of Vedantic cosmology, just as he no doubt did before the Southern California Academy of Sciences.)

The lecture, which Mrs. Hansbrough recalled as having been as "enchancing as the first," was a great success. From one of Miss MacLeod's unpublished letters, one learns that the audience at Unity Church numbered over a thousand and that at the close of the lecture a Mr. Lloyd came upon the platform to pay his tribute to the Swami's valuable contribution to psychology and modern thought.

"Swami spoke very quietly last night," Miss MacLeod recounted in another unpublished letter, written on December 13 to her sister,

in fact it seems to be his new way, but he was most scholarly & clear in his lecture on the Kosmos, and one member of the Academy of Sciences, a Mr. Lloyd (graduate of

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Harvard, after which he took a degree in Germany) said he wanted to pay his personal tribute to the Swami Vivekananda, who had done so much for modern psychology, that he was a light among thinkers etc etc & then he asked him a pertinent question as to the Vedanta idea of Kosmos that Swami answered so brilliantly that applause came from everyone. Several questions were asked & answered and coming home Mr. Baumgardt was *radiant*. For it was he who had vouched for Swami. Someone in the audience asked: "What is the difference between Vedanta & Theosophy?" & Swami answered: "I do not know. I have never made a study of Theosophic literature." Which was a proof to everyone that he did not stand for Theosophy.¹¹

Another had asked that evening if he would not hold classes, and Swamiji was indeed ready to do so. His health had by now noticeably improved; even the exertion of speaking before a large audience for the first time in well over a year had not been too great a strain. "Though he lectured last night before 1000 people," Miss MacLeod related in the same letter to her sister, "he drank a glass of hot milk [on returning home] and slept like a child all night." Swamiji had not only lectured to a large audience that day, December 12, he had also written a letter to Mrs. Bull full of annoyance and, as well, of anguish. Mrs. Bull had evidently received from Swami Saradananda a letter that had been too much for her mother heart. We can be fairly sure that she had kept faith with Swami Saradananda, never disclosing his confidences, whatever they may have been; but she could no longer forbear to remonstrate with Swamiji, protesting, it would seem, his "harsh" treatment of his brothers and counselling a more tender approach. In reply she received, as she might have expected, a blast. "You are perfectly right," Swamiji wrote; "I am brutal, very indeed. But about the tenderness etc., that is my fault. I wish I had less, much less of that—that is my weakness—and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

alas! all my sufferings have come from that....I am very sorry I use harsh language to my boys, but they also know I love them more than anybody else on earth. I may have had Divine help—true; but oh, the pound of blood every bit of Divine help has been to me! ! I would be a gladder and a better man without that. The present looks very gloomy indeed; but I am a fighter and must die fighting, not give way—that is why I get crazy at the boys. I don't ask them to fight, but not to hinder my fight. I don't grudge my fate. But oh! now I want a man, one of my boys, to stand by me and fight against all odds!...My mistakes have been great; but every one of them was from too much love. How I hate *love*! Would I never had any Bhakti! Indeed, I wish I could be an Advaitist, calm and heartless. Well, this life is done. I will try in the next. ...It is the weak heart that has driven me out of India to seek some help for those I love, and here I am! Peace have I sought, but the heart, that seat of Bhakti, would not allow me to find it. Struggle and torture, torture and struggle! Well, be it then, since it is my fate, and the quicker it is over, the better. They say I am impulsive, but look at the circumstances!!!"¹²

(Mrs. Bull must have given way to a long sigh—not the first since she had met Swamiji and tried to counsel him. But her motherly plea for his brothers, late though it was—for his scoldings were over—did not go unheeded. The day after writing the above, Swamiji, like an anxious father, sent a cablegram to Swami Brahmananda and wrote a long letter to Swami Saradananda, telling them of his restored health and good spirits. And around December 21, Miss MacLeod told Sister Nivedita, he wrote “another long letter in Bengali to Saradananda.”¹³ Nor did many days pass before he became concerned over the silence from the Math. On December 27, he wrote to Mrs. Bull, who, in accordance with his wish, had evidently forwarded him no letters from India: “I had a very bad dream this morning and had not any news of Saradananda for three weeks. Poor boys! How hard I am on them

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

at times. Well, they know in spite of all that, I am their best friend.”¹⁴ And in another letter to Mrs. Bull, which has been dated December 22 but which was almost certainly written after the above, he wrote, “Kindly send Saradananda’s letters that have come to your care.”¹⁵

2

By the time Swamiji delivered this second lecture, he had no doubt moved from Miss Spencer’s home to Mrs. Blodgett’s at 921 West Twenty-first Street. Mrs. “Roxie” Blodgett, whom he described to Mary Hale as “fat, old, extremely witty. . . and very motherly,” was, it so happened, one of those Californians to whom the name of Swami Vivekananda was well known. She had attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago six years earlier and had there heard him give his first talk to the American people. “When that young man got up and said, ‘Sisters and Brothers of America,’ ” she told Miss MacLeod, “seven thousand [actually, four thousand] people rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what; and when it was over and I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him, I said to myself, ‘Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught, you are indeed a god.’ ” Swamiji was indeed a god. In Chicago Mrs. Blodgett acquired a large colored poster of him, which she hung in her home in Los Angeles, never dreaming that he would one day be her guest. This poster, hanging incredibly over her dying brother’s bed, had greeted Miss MacLeod when she had arrived from Ridgely Manor. Astounded, she had asked Mrs. Blodgett, “What do you know about him?” and Mrs. Blodgett had told her story. “I know him,” Miss MacLeod had said, and then, “Why don’t you ask him here?” “To my cottage?” “He will come.” And in her memoirs she relates: “In three weeks my brother was dead and in six weeks Swamiji was there.”¹ (Later on, Miss MacLeod brought this poster, which showed Swamiji standing in his robe and

turban, to Ridgely Manor, where she mounted it in a toweringly high-backed Gothic chair. For years it remained thus in her bedroom. "One would hardly dare go into her room," Mrs. Frances Leggett told me, "—this enormous thing appearing there!")

The neighborhood in which Mrs. Blodgett lived is today deep in the city and caught in a triangle between two intersecting overhead freeways. The nine-hundred block of West Twenty-first Street, where her cottage stood, is a run-down one of small, worn-out houses and two-story apartment buildings. Foliage is not absent; but trees and flowers notwithstanding, there remains scarcely a hint of the peaceful rural scene that existed when Swamiji was there. In those early days the neighborhood was on the "outskirts of the city"; the streets were quiet, unpaved roads, and the houses, few and far between, were amply surrounded with trees—deep-skirted palms, peppers, and blue-flowering jacarandas—gardens, and open lots. To the west and south stretched citrus groves and grain fields, and one need not have walked far to be among the farms. "It is exactly like Northern Indian winter here, only some days a little warmer," Swamiji wrote in late December to Mary Hale; "the roses are here and the beautiful palms. Barley is in the fields, roses and many other flowers round about the cottage where I live."² In her published reminiscences, Miss MacLeod describes Mrs. Blodgett's house as "a small white cottage covered with roses" and as having "three bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, and a sitting room."³

Swamiji's life at Mrs. Blodgett's was simple, relaxed, and filled with the peace that he himself brought to it. "What a breath of the Infinite he always brings with him!"⁴ Miss MacLeod was to write to Mary Hale a month or two later. And indeed to the homeliest of everyday events he lent an indefinable brightness. No moment in his presence was an ordinary one, and this not because he covered whatever illness, sorrow, or worry he may have felt at the time with a

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

veneer of cheerfulness, but because he transcended every distress of mind or body and entered freely into the state of divine joy that was natural to him. Again and again one finds Swamiji responding to adverse circumstances of his life and mission with a cry of anguish or despair, for his heart was intensely human; yet again and again one finds him *at the same time* filled with a transcendent bliss and imparting that bliss to others. "No harm in the world in my being happy, in being miserable, but others must not catch it," he had written in his letter of December 6, 1899, to Sister Nivedita, and the passage clearly sounds the basic theme of his life: "If you are really ready to take the world's burden, take it by all means. But do not let us hear your groans and curses. Do not frighten us with your sufferings, so that we come to feel we were better off with our own burdens. The man who really takes the burden, blesses the world and goes his own way. He has not a word of condemnation, a word of criticism, not because there was no evil but that he has taken it on his own shoulders, willingly, voluntarily. It is the Saviour who should 'go his way rejoicing,' and not the saved. . . . Come ye that are heavily laden and lay all your burden on me and then do whatever you like and be happy and forget that I ever existed."⁵

In a letter written to Miss MacLeod by Mrs. Blodgett in July of 1902, the light Swamiji shed over those days in Los Angeles is almost visible. This letter, which serves as a memoir, was first published in *Vedanta and the West* of November, December 1953, and will bear quoting here in part:

I am ever recalling those swift, bright days in that never to be forgotten winter, lived in simple freedom and kindness. We could not choose but to be happy and good. . . . I knew him personally but a short time, yet in that time I could but see in a hundred ways the child side of Swamiji's character which was a constant appeal to the Mother quality in *all good women*. He depended on those near him in a way which brought him very near one's

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

heart. Possessing as he did an almost inexhaustible knowledge of things old as the world, a sage and philosopher, he yet appeared to me utterly to lack the commercial knowledge which so distinguish men of the Western world! You were constantly rendering him some apparently trifling service in the everyday homely happenings of life, he in some small way requiring to be set right. . . .

One day busy with my work and Swamiji absorbed with his curries and chapatties, I spoke to him of you when he said: "Ah yes! Joe is the sweetest spirit of us all." . . . Ah, those pleasant "tea party" days, as you used to call them. How we used to laugh! Do you remember the time he was showing me how he wound his turban about his head and you were begging him to hasten as he was already due at a lecture. I said, "Swamiji, don't hurry. Like the man on his way to be hung and the crowd jostling each other to reach the place of execution who called out, 'Don't hurry, there will be nothing interesting till I get there!'—I assure you, Swami, there will be nothing interesting till you get there!" This so pleased him that often afterwards he would say: "There will be nothing interesting till I get there"—and laugh like a boy.

Just now I recall a morning when quite an audience had gathered at our house to listen to the learned Hindu who was sitting with downcast eyes and impenetrable face while his audience waited. His meditation over, he raised his eyes to Mrs. Leggett's and asked like a simple child: "What shall I say?" This gifted man possessing the subtle power of delighting an intellectual audience of cultured men and women asking for a theme! And there appeared to me in the question an exquisite touch of confidence in her judgment. An interesting portion of the day you lost in the early mornings when you and your sister were sleeping. He would come in for his morning plunge in the bath and soon his deep voice

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

would be heard in solemn chant. Though Sanskrit is an unknown tongue to me I caught the spirit of it all, and these morning devotions are among my sweetest recollections of the great Hindu. In the homely old-fashioned kitchen you and I have seen Swamiji at his best.

I heard very few of Swamiji's public lectures; my age and household duties gave me no choice but like Martha to sit in the house. Were you present at a lecture when one of those ladies who love to make themselves conspicuous by some ill-timed remark asked: "Swami, who is it that supports the monks in your country? There are so many of them, you know." Like a flash Swami replied: "The same who support the clergy in your country, Madam—the women!" The audience laughed and Swamiji proceeded with his lecture....⁶

There was a difference of opinion as to whether or not Josephine MacLeod and her sister, who was to come from New York at the beginning of 1900, heard Swamiji chanting in his morning bath. Joe, who should have known, believed they did. "Every morning," she wrote in her reminiscences, "we would hear Swami chanting his Sanskrit from the bath, which was just off the kitchen. He would come out with tousled hair and get ready for breakfast," she continued. "Mrs. Blodgett made delicious pancakes, and these we would eat at the kitchen table, Swami sitting with us; and such discourses he would have with Mrs. Blodgett, such repartee and wit, she talking of the villainy of men and he talking of even the greater wickedness of women!"⁷

And there was one early morning, special for its date—December 21, the solar New Year—which Miss MacLeod does not mention in her memoirs, but of which she wrote to Mrs. Bull: "Swamiji and I greeted each other, dear S. S., this morning with 'a happy New Year' after which we greeted the Sun, while he recited the Gayatri!"⁸

Everyday, sometimes after breakfast, Swamiji and Miss

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

MacLeod, accompanied very likely by Mrs. Blodgett's dog Trix, would walk to the home of a magnetic healer named Mrs. Melton, whom, as Swamiji wrote, "Joe had unearthed" and who lived about a mile and a half away. There they would take turns undergoing what Swamiji described as "skin-paring." Mrs. Melton, who could neither read nor write and who spoke, it was said, "in a negro dialect," had upon her a gift. She felt herself to be an instrument in the hands of a Higher Power, as Betty Leggett was to write to her husband,⁹ and she did nothing without its command. Her treatments were, to be sure, unusual, consisting in a sort of massage charged with excruciating "magnetism." Her patients winced with pain as she ran fingers like "streams of fire" over their bodies.¹⁰ It was sheer agony, particularly, perhaps, for Betty Leggett, who was in pain to begin with, having been suffering for months from an injury to her leg that refused to heal. (It had been because of the healer's abilities that Mrs. Leggett was to come to Los Angeles, arriving on January 5. From across the continent, Mrs. Melton had diagnosed the difficulty. Holding a handkerchief of Betty Leggett's in her hands, she had divined that an imbedded needle or pin was causing the trouble.¹¹ And sure enough, she was later to draw out a needle or pin by her magnetic powers.)

Although Swamiji did not object to Mrs. Melton's "skin-parings," he did not share Joe's unqualified faith in them. "Joe thinks she [Mrs. Melton] is pulling me up splendidly," he wrote to Mrs. Bull on December 27. "On her has been worked a miracle, she claims. Whether it is magnetic healing, California ozone, or the end of the present spell of bad Karma, I am improving. It is a great thing to be able to walk three miles, even after a heavy dinner."¹² But in March he was to write to Mrs. Bull from San Francisco, "With all Joe's enthusiasm, I have not yet found any real benefit from the magnetic healer, except a few red patches on my chest from scratching!"¹³ And in April, after Mrs. Melton had gone to New

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

York, he wrote again to Mrs. Bull, "I am so happy to learn that all the New York friends are being cured by Mrs. Melton. She has been very unsuccessful, it seems, in Los Angeles, as all the people we introduced tell me. Some are in a worse state than before the skin paring....I, of course, would not write this to Joe; she is happy in her dreams of having done so much good to poor sufferers." (Joe was indeed happy in these dreams. "I bless Mrs. Melton, the magnetic healer, daily," she wrote to Mary Hale in February of 1900; "& only hope those I love—& hate?—may have the benefit of her power.")¹⁴ "But oh," Swamiji continued to Mrs. Bull, "if she could hear the Los Angeles folks...she would change her mind at once and learn wisdom from an old adage not to recommend medicine to anyone."¹⁵ In this same letter, however, Swamiji conceded that Mrs. Melton's "rubbings" had done him good "at the time at least." And certainly something was doing him good. "Oh the peace and blessing of this life!" Miss MacLeod exclaimed in a letter of December 15 to Sister Nivedita. "And with each day comes the feeling that the reestablishment of Swami to health is more & more permanent."¹⁶

Returning from Mrs. Melton's or, as the case might have been, from a morning class, Swamiji would generally cook the noon dinner, which, as Miss MacLeod wrote in one of her letters, "we all enjoy hugely." According to a passage in Mrs. Blodgett's letter from which a long excerpt has been quoted above, "He would come home from a lecture where he was compelled to break away from his audience, so eagerly would they gather around him, and rush into the kitchen like a boy released from school with 'Now we will cook!' Presently Joe would appear and discover the culprit among the pots and pans in his fine dress who was by thriftily watchful Joe admonished to change to his home garments."¹⁷

After lunch, if nothing interfered, Swamiji would lie in the garden hammock, sometimes "lost," Miss MacLeod wrote to Mrs. Bull, "in reading Elisée Reclus [the French geographer

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and social philosopher] on *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*,"¹⁸ a work of many large, illustrated volumes dealing with his favorite subject—Man. Sometimes Miss MacLeod would talk to him or read her correspondence to him particularly her letters from Sister Nivedita. But "he talks very little," she wrote to Mrs. Bull on December 21, "scarcely at all." And to Nivedita the day before, she wrote that Swamiji was so much quieter than she had ever seen him that she watched for the least new mood that might be brewing in that silence—a mood that would bring about some sudden and swift change of plan.¹⁹

Yet quiet as Swamiji was, one can well imagine that guests were often invited in the evenings to meet him. He must also have been entertained in other homes, and on one occasion that we know of he went to the theater. "On Saturday [December 23] we are going to see 'My Friend from India,' the farce on Swamiji!" Miss MacLeod wrote to Sister Nivedita, and added, "It will be *screaming* fun! & good relaxation after all his lectures."²⁰

The play, which was making a three-day stand at the Los Angeles Theater, had opened in New York in October of 1896, had subsequently run in England and throughout America, and was billed in the local papers as the "Greatest Farce-Comedy Success of the Century." Not everyone agreed with this verdict. "Such farces as these," the *Los Angeles Times* critic wrote sourly, "...play down to the lowest type of intelligence, and for that reason they come near to being an affront."²¹

To be sure, this three-act play was not an intellectual experience. Nor, strictly speaking, was it "a farce on Swamiji." Rather, it was a satire of sorts on New York Society's lionizing of him, and had been written, as Mrs. Hansbrough later recounted, "as a result of his first visit to the United States." The impression that New York's Four Hundred had "taken up" Swamiji was so prevalent in America that shortly after his death an Iowan newspaper referred to him as "the Hindoo monk and philosopher, who preached himself into New York's

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

exclusive Society. . . [which] took him up as a 'fad' and lionized him."²² Because "My Friend from India" was based on this "lionization" and because Swamiji was highly amused by the play, the reader may like to know what it was about.

The action, all of which takes place in a richly furnished library in a Madison Avenue residence, concerns a rough-and-tumble nouveau-riche widower from Kansas City, his twice-widowed sister, his son, and his two daughters. For years the father has tried, for the sake of his family, to break into New York High Society, without the slightest success. One morning, for reasons we need not go into, the son dresses a new acquaintance of his, who happens to be a barber, in a yellow silk bedspread and introduces him to the family as "my friend from India"—a Bostonian who "has been studying the mysticism of the East and has learned all there is to know of Theosophy and attained that most exalted state, Nirvana." The father at once hits upon a plan. "It's one of those things," he exclaims, "a freak that society is craving for! It's a brand new one, and it's dropped right into my hand. I'll nail him and work it for all it's worth." The women of the family are enchanted to find a mystic in the house, and in no time the father gives the story to the newspapers, which blaze forth with headlines. "Aha!" cries the father. "We've got 'em now, girls." "Who, papa?" "Who? Society, of course." And, to the son's horror, invitations to a reception for the disguised barber are sent out to the cream of the Four Hundred. All the women in the family buy costly, and, as it happens, identical, yellow gowns. The barber is similarly outfitted; and a large part of the play's hilarity depends upon the numerous mistakes in identity that ensue. A few Christian ministers, both genuine and spurious, are mixed into the muddle for good measure, and confusion piles upon confusion. But in the end, all is straightened out. By a happy fluke, the invitations to the reception had not been mailed; the young people, as well as the aunt, are betrothed to the choice of their hearts; social aspirations are forgotten, and the father goes back to Kansas City, where of course he has

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

wanted to be all along. Clearly, none of these carryings-on had anything to do with Swamiji, except—and this is the point to be noted—there was no question in anyone's mind that if the invitations *had* gone out, New York's Four Hundred would have accepted them with alacrity, drawn irresistibly by the lure of the yellow robe.

"The play was really very funny," Mrs. Hansbrough assures us, "and Swamiji enjoyed it hugely. Professor Baumgardt [who had been the party's host] said he had never seen anyone laugh so hard or so much."²³

One might mention in passing that Swamiji went also to a vaudeville in Los Angeles. (For the benefit of youthful readers, I should perhaps say that at the turn of the century, and on through the twenties, vaudeville was the most popular form of entertainment in the United States—and often the best.²⁴ The term *vaudeville* applied in America to a variety of short, unrelated performances by singers, dancers, acrobats, fancy bicyclists, trained dogs, jugglers, dramatic artists of all sorts, and, inevitably, magicians. The standard was generally high. Indeed, it was not considered at all demeaning or unusual for top-notch theatrical talent to tour the vaudeville circuit.)²⁵ The circumstances that brought about Swamiji's attendance at the show were told by Betty Leggett in a letter of January 12 to her husband:

Yesterday a lady and daughter of sixteen called, both seemingly very cultivated Eastern women, one judged at once by the accent and by the voice, and told him they had attended his lectures in London three years before. The child was so impressed by his religion that she adopted his precepts and directed her life as nearly as possible by them and concluded to use her talents for dancing, make her living and express to the world the sublimity of art, religion etc. It seemed an original point of view. This young girl had never spoken to Swami before, but wanted him to go and see her dance. We all went last evening to a vaudeville where her grace was wonderful,

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

but I was painfully impressed by the contortions part of her work. Her body seemed a bit of chiffon, she could do with it as if there were no bone, hold her foot at the back of her head, standing on the other toe. It made me ache with sympathy instead of giving enjoyment of grace and harmony. I think Vedanta seems to have affected many others [Mrs. Leggett added] with a sort of necessity for contortioning instead of giving them an easy balance of character.²⁶

But the young contortionist had probably put her whole soul into that performance for Swamiji—a performance he had gone out of his way to see simply because she had asked him.

“I am cured, you will be glad to know,” Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale on December 27. “It was only indigestion and no heart or kidney affection, quoth the healers; nothing more. And I am walking three miles a day—after a heavy dinner. Say—the person healing me insisted on my smoking! So I am having my pipe nicely and am all the better for it. [Smoking had been denied him by Dr. Helmer.] In plain English the nervousness etc. was all due to dyspepsia and nothing more.”²⁷ “He actually ran to catch the electric car today!” Miss MacLeod exclaimed in a letter to Mrs. Bull; and in a passage that appears in an unpublished version of Swamiji’s letter to Mary Hale, he wrote with the exuberance of regained health that he felt strong enough to pitch all “six feet” of her “a few hundred yards” like a feather.

There is no doubt that life in Los Angeles benefited Swamiji’s health and thereby fulfilled at least one purpose of his visit; nor is there any doubt that he thoroughly enjoyed his weeks at Mrs. Blodgett’s. (“I remember, perfectly, the delight of Swamiji during his stay with [good old Mrs. Blodgett],” Mrs. Charlotte Sevier wrote years afterward to Miss MacLeod; “he often spoke of it.”)²⁸ But cooking for his friends, joking and laughing his fill, walking three miles a day, submitting to Mrs. Melton’s

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

magnetic treatments, and attending a farce did not by any means fulfill the primary purpose of his stay in California; nor had these relaxing pursuits been enough in themselves to bring him health. It was not until he had started holding classes in Los Angeles that he felt a sense of well-being and that the true meaning of his stay in California began to reveal itself. "I am very much more peaceful," he assured Mrs. Bull on December 27, "and find that the only way to keep my peace is to teach others. Work is my only safety valve."²⁹

The fact is that from first to last Swamiji was a Teacher. Thus while he had not come to California with the express purpose of teaching, it was not long before he plunged into work. So totally identified was he with his destiny that there was no need for him to make plans in advance or to consciously plot his course. "Religion was never preached by planners!" he had once exclaimed.³⁰ His way opened of itself; his mission unfolded as he went. "Swami just waits," Sister Nivedita remarked of him in January of 1900, "and drifts in on the wave. . . . I am just beginning to understand his bigness."³¹

As we have seen, Swamiji delivered two public lectures shortly after his arrival in Los Angeles, both of which were in a sense introductions to India and to Vedantic thought. It was on the day following the second of these lectures that the way opened to holding classes. "Some ladies are desirous of getting up classes," Miss MacLeod wrote on December 14 to Mrs. Leggett. These ladies were undoubtedly the Mead sisters, who had had their first meeting with Swamiji on Wednesday, December 13. In her memoirs, Miss MacLeod tells us that all three sisters came to call upon Swamiji. Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences," however, differ a little in this regard, and since the day was an unforgettable one in her life, her memory of it is perhaps more accurate. "My sister Helen and I went to call on Swamiji," she said in telling of the occasion. "He

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

was dressed to receive us in a knee-length coat. He wore a kind of minister's collar with what must have been a clerical vest, and his hair was covered by a black turban which rolled back."¹ As she was later to learn, this was the costume Swamiji generally wore when he was not lecturing, and sometimes, except for his black turban, when he *was* lecturing.

Miss MacLeod, who was present with Swamiji to greet the two sisters, disappeared after a few minutes, as was her custom when visitors paid him their first call. The sisters' talk with Swamiji, however, does not seem to have been particularly confidential. "The conversation," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "was only general. He said he was very glad we were interested in his lectures. We asked how long he expected to stay in Los Angeles, and he replied that he did not know, but that if we cared to arrange a class, he would be glad to address the group."² She remembered him as having been "rather shy and reserved" but "enchanting"—a word she often used when speaking of him. Swamiji's offer to hold a class was jumped at as the opportunity it was, and no doubt preliminary arrangements were made then and there. Everyone was delighted. "Yesterday he fairly danced from glee—like the child that he is," Miss MacLeod wrote in her letter of December 14 to her sister.³

Swamiji's glee seems to have been caused not only by the turn of events, but by an independent upsurge of his spirits. "On December 13th Swami wrote a long beautiful letter in Bengali to Saradananda telling him of his recovery—& full of courage! & the same day sent a cablegram to Brahmananda—'Perfectly cured. Bless all. Vivekananda.'" Thus Miss MacLeod informed Sister Nivedita on December 15, and added, "He really seems to feel, & act as if a new era were open to Him!" "[He] is talking and lecturing so quietly that it does not seem to fatigue him in the least," she wrote in the same letter, "& he says that he [would] just as lieve lecture every day or have classes."⁴ As though in response to Swamiji's readiness the way just then opened. The Mead sisters "eagerly went about getting a class together," Mrs. Hansbrough related,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and indeed she and Helen seem to have wasted no time at all. A series of three classes was arranged for the following week, to be held in the Blanchard Building. A Mr. Thaddeus S. Fritz, a religious teacher and healer who regularly gave two Sunday lectures at Blanchard Hall and whom Miss MacLeod wrote of as "a fine young man, the head of 'the Forward Movement,' a splendid broad thinker and worker," announced the classes to his Sunday audiences.⁵ On the same Sunday (December 17) the following advertisement appeared in both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Herald*:

Swami Vivekananda will deliver 3 class lectures on "Applied Psychology" at Blanchard Hall, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday [December 19, 21 and 22] at 7:30. Everybody welcome.

The words, "Everybody welcome," in the above announcement would indicate that the classes were free of charge; but according to Mrs. Hansbrough, "each person paid a dollar for every meeting,"⁶ a memory that seems in keeping with Swamiji's need at this time to earn money. His first class on "Applied Psychology" was held not in the main auditorium of the Blanchard Building but in three studio rooms that opened one into the other. "The arrangement was not very satisfactory," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "especially since the attendance was somewhere between one hundred and fifty and two hundred. So when a Mr. Bransby suggested moving to a nice chapel which he could arrange for at the Home of Truth, it was decided to follow his suggestion."⁷

Mr. J. Ransome Bransby, who, together with his wife, was then directing the Los Angeles Home of Truth—a religious society of "New Thought" persuasion—had called on Swamiji twice, asking him to lecture at the Home. Many years later he recalled these meetings in a letter to Mr. Thomas J. Allan (of whom we shall hear more in a later chapter) in reply to the latter's inquiry regarding Swamiji's life in southern California.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mr. Bransby's letter was dated January 17, 1936, and read:

Swami Vivekananda gave two lectures at the Home of Truth in Los Angeles over thirty five years ago. They were attended by large appreciative audiences. The Swami spoke with great charm and spirit. He spoke as one having authority; as one who had an inexhaustible reservoir of knowledge to draw from. Speaking in a language not native to him he manifested a fluency seldom, if ever, attained by those whose natural speech is English.

I called on the Swami twice to make arrangements for his meetings. The first time at the Stimson mansion on Figueroa Street. I was introduced to a man who was the embodiment of poise and dignity. Handsomely dressed in black relieved by spotless linen the Swami overwhelmed me by his presence and personality. The next time I called on the Swami the conditions were different. Instead of the home of luxury the setting was a small cottage in a poor part of town. The Swami seemed like another man. Gone was the broadcloth—gone the starched collar and cuffs replaced by an orange colored robe that looked jolly comfortable. And what do you suppose the great man was doing—he was engaged in the humble pastime of eating roasted peanuts. He avowed with a merry laugh that they would give him indigestion.⁸

Mr. Bransby's memory seems to have failed him after so many years in regard to the number of lectures Swamiji gave at the Home of Truth; actually, he gave eight in all. But however that may be, he lost no time in moving his classes to the Home, holding there his second and third talks in the series on "Applied Psychology." A note to this effect appeared on December 20 in a column of the *Los Angeles Times* entitled "City Briefs":

Lectures by Swami Vivekananda on applied psychology

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

will be held at 1327 Georgia street, December 21 and 22. This cancels former notice.

The above seems to have been the only announcement made to the Los Angeles public that Swamiji had moved the location of his classes. However, "City Briefs," a daily column containing many items of local interest, was no doubt widely and regularly read, and word surely got around. His first class had been a success. "A line to tell you that Swami was most successful last night in 'applied psychology,' " Miss MacLeod wrote on December 20 to Nivedita, "there being much enthusiasm, and the best is," she continued, "that he slept soundly afterwards! to his astonishment."⁹ (Appreciation of Swamiji's teaching was heard even in New York. "It is to be regretted that we were not brought up on this philosophy instead of having a foundation which is useless when we are of reasonable age," one of his Los Angeles listeners, whose words come down to us anonymously, wrote in December to the New York Vedanta Society.)¹⁰

Unhappily, the transcripts of Swamiji's three classes on "Applied Psychology" are not available; yet transcripts there once were, for as Mrs. Hansbrough tells us, these classes were all taken down in shorthand. "At first," she said, "we had the nephew of Mrs. Bagley, with whom Swamiji had stayed in Detroit [in 1894], to take notes. I remember that he said Swamiji was 'very hard to follow.' "¹¹ Later the Mead sisters engaged a Miss McClary, who went everywhere that Swamiji lectured or held classes, her pencil busy. In addition, we read in Brahmacharini Usha's valuable article "Swamiji in Southern California" (*Vedanta and the West*, No. 158) that Helen Mead recorded a number of his talks. Thus, almost from the beginning to the end of Swamiji's work in southern California there was no dearth of transcripts, all of which—at least all that are available today—are particularly excellent and certainly of much value. According to Mrs. Hansbrough, Sister Nivedita sent for them all, and subsequently some

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

were published in the *Brahmavadin* and *Prabuddha Bharata* and later in the *Complete Works*. What became of the rest is a question one might well ponder.

On the day following Swamiji's third and last class of the "Applied Psychology" series a morning reception was held for him by a Mrs. Caroline M. Severance, to which she invited, as Miss MacLeod informed Mrs. Bull, "a number of 'advanced' women to meet him."¹² (This reception, incidentally, was to have been held originally on Saturday, December 16, but because of rain—a rare occurrence that winter—it had been postponed.) Mrs. Severance was not a stranger to Swamiji. One finds that this remarkable woman, who was known as "the Mother of Women's Clubs," had attended one of his first lectures in America—his talk delivered in Salem, Massachusetts, before the Thought and Work Club—during the days when he was not yet sure he would speak at the Parliament of Religions. One finds, also, that Swamiji and Mrs. Severance had several other associations in common. The famous New England Woman's Club, before which he had spoken in May of 1894, when it was headed by Julia Ward Howe, had been organized in 1868 as a result of Mrs. Severance's efforts. Further, she had served in 1867 as vice-president of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's Free Religious Association, before which Swamiji had spoken in August of 1894 and of which his good friend Dr. Lewis G. Jones had recently become president. Also, from Miss MacLeod's letter it is clear that Mrs. Severance was acquainted with Mrs. Bull; and from other sources one learns that the author Kate Douglas Wiggin, who had attended Swamiji's New York lectures, had in earlier years been her protégée.

Mrs. Severance, or Madam Severance, as she was sometimes called, was nearing her eightieth birthday when Swamiji met her again in Los Angeles. Behind her was a life devoted to various good causes, some of which must have been startling to her Victorian contemporaries. In addition to founding numerous women's clubs both on the East Coast and in

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

California, she was "active in the Unitarian Church...a pronounced woman suffragist [and] a zealous peace advocate"; she was, moreover, "a believer in a single standard of morals and [far in advance of her time] in birth control and...numbered among her friends women 'who wore bloomers and rode astride.'"¹³

Mrs. Severance's reception was held in her home, which she called "El Nido" and which stood in one of the most attractive, large-gardened residential districts in Los Angeles, not far from Mrs. Blodgett's cottage. Of the reception itself, we learn a little from the following item that appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald* of December 24:

An informal reception was given the Swami Vivekananda yesterday morning by Mrs. C. M. Severance at her home on West Adams street. The Swami answered many questions asked by the guests concerning the condition of women in India and the educational needs of his people. His object in visiting this country at present is to make preparations for the education of his people, who, while they have fine memories and are versed in occult philosophy, have few or no opportunities for an education. The Swami is preparing to inaugurate a system of itinerant teaching whereby the people may be reached in the fields and at their work wherever it may be. His talk was highly interesting to the guests.

It should perhaps be mentioned that among these guests was very probably Swamiji's old friend Mrs. Kate Tannatt Woods, president of the Thought and Work Club, at whose Salem home he had spent a week in August of 1893. From various records one learns that Mrs. Woods was in Los Angeles in 1899 and 1900,¹⁴ and although no details of this Los Angeles sojourn are available, it is unlikely that a friend of both Mrs. Severance and Swamiji would have stayed away from the reception. In any case, one likes to think that Swamiji

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

and Mrs. Woods met once again. She would have found him changed in many respects, yet striving still and with as full a heart as ever, if with less hope, to raise money for the education of his countrymen.

Swamiji may have intended to hold no more than one series of three classes in Los Angeles. But his mission had, as it were, a will of its own, and this, combined with his love of teaching, of giving without limit to others, was like an incoming tide that cannot be stopped until it reaches its fullness. "[Mother] cannot let me go before Her work is done--and that is the secret,"¹⁵ he wrote to Sister Nivedita on December 23. And the following day a series of six classes to be held at the Home of Truth was announced in large type on the theater page of the *Sunday Times*:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Lectures on Mind and Its Powers at the Home of Truth. 1327 Georgia st., 10 a.m. each day—December 25th to 30th inclusive. Subject Monday [Christmas Day], Christ's Message to the World. Course of six lectures \$3, single lecture 50¢. Tickets on sale at Bartlett Music Store. 235 S. Broadway.

It is possible that Swamiji now moved his living quarters to the Home of Truth, which could accommodate, with board, "students and patients" and surely teachers and healers as well. It is not certain, however, that he did so. In the *Life of Swami Vivekananda* one reads: "At the special request of an association known as the "Home of Truth" he spent nearly a month at its headquarters in Los Angeles, and held many classes there, and gave several public lectures at which, every time, more than a thousand people attended."¹⁶ But as has been pointed out in *Vedanta and the West* (No. 158), our available sources of information provide no other reference to Swamiji's having lived at the Los Angeles Home of Truth.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

There are, in fact, indications to the contrary. For instance, in a letter written on December 27 he still refers to Mrs. Blodgett as his hostess.¹⁷ Further, in Mr. Bransby's letter to Mr. Allan there is no mention that Swamiji had lived at the Home of Truth. Again, there is no apparent reason why he would have lived there. The Home was within easy walking distance of 921 West Twenty-first Street; it was only a little over half a mile away, and by this time half a mile to Swamiji was a mere nothing. He could have walked to his morning class, and after it was over he could have walked back to rush into Mrs. Blodgett's kitchen with a happy "Now we will cook!" However, the matter of whether Swamiji stayed or did not stay at the Home of Truth in Los Angeles cannot be settled with finality on the basis of our present knowledge. Only one thing is certain: he did not spend—he could not have spent—"nearly a month at its headquarters."

Of Swamiji's Mind-and-Its-Powers series at the Home of Truth only two class titles have been known to us: "Christ's Message to the World" and "Hints on Practical Spirituality." Recently, however, we have been fortunate enough to have discovered in the *Times's* "City Briefs" three additional titles of this series. As we have seen, Swamiji spoke on Christ on Christmas Day; the title of his class of December 26 was not announced, but those held from December 27 to 30 were, respectively: "Theory of Concentration," "Practice of Concentration," "Spiritual Breathing," and "Reincarnation." In this list we find no such title as "Hints on Practical Spirituality," but to judge from the text of that class, as published in the *Complete Works*, its original title may well have been "Spiritual Breathing." (Clearly, "Hints" was held toward the end of the series, and clearly also, spiritual breathing was its subject. "This morning," Swamiji said at the start, "I shall try to present to you some ideas about breathing and other exercises. We have been discussing theories so long that now it will be well to have a little of the practical.")¹⁸

In the Los Angeles papers one can discover no further notice

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

of these Home of Truth class lectures, nor any reports of them. In *Unity* magazine for February of 1900, however, one finds a short but relevant article written by Mr. J. Ransome Bransby. One wishes that Mr. Bransby, who surely attended more than one of Swamiji's lectures, had told more about them; but the following account, some portions of which have been quoted in the *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, will have to suffice. It is given here in full:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT THE LOS ANGELES HOME

Of all the Vedantist missionaries who have visited this country probably Vivekananda is the most widely known, because he has done the most public works here and was such a notable figure at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago. The other Swamis who are working in America were sent here by Vivekananda, but all of them are either directly or indirectly the disciples of one great teacher, Ramakrishna, who was an extreme Ascetic and at the same time an illumined soul, one might almost be tempted to say in spite of his Asceticism, for the Swami Vivekananda after twenty years' experience as an Ascetic has come to the conclusion that it is a mistake and not the road that leads to freedom. The Swami himself looks anything but an Ascetic. He reminds one rather of the good hearty monks one reads about as having flourished at the time of the Crusades.

The Hindoo missionaries are not among us to convert us to a better religion than Christ gave us, but rather in the name of religion itself to show us that there is in reality but one religion, and that we can do no better than to put in practice what we profess to believe. We had eight lectures at the Home by the Swami and all were intensely interesting, though a few malcontents complained because he did not give some short cuts

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

into the Kingdom [of Heaven] and show an easy way to the attainment of mental powers; instead he would say, "Go home and promise yourself that you will not worry for a whole month even though the maid breaks all your best china."

There is combined in the Swami Vivekananda the learning of a university president, the dignity of an archbishop, with the grace and winsomeness of a free natural child. Getting on the platform without a moment's preparation he would soon be in the midst of his subject, sometimes becoming almost tragic as his mind would wander from deep metaphysics to the prevailing condition in Christian countries today who go and seek to reform Filipinos with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, or in South Africa allow children of the same father to cut each other to pieces. To contrast this condition of things he described what took place during the last famine in India where men would die of starvation beside their cattle rather than stretch forth a hand to kill. (Will Unity readers remember the fifty million Hindoos who are starving today and send them a blessing?)

Instead of trying to give much of what we heard from the Swami direct, I will append a few of the sayings of his master, Ramakrishna, that will better indicate the nature of his teaching. His chief aim seems to be to encourage people in living simple, quiet wholesome lives—that the life shall be the religion, not something separate and apart.

To the true mother he gives the highest place, counting her as more to be esteemed than those who simply run around teaching. "Anyone can talk," he said, "but if I had to look after a baby, I could not endure existence for more than three days." Frequently he would speak of the "mother" as we speak of the "father," and would say "the mother will take care of us," or "the mother will look after things."

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

We had a lecture on Christmas day from the Swami entitled, "Christ's Mission to the World," and a better one on this subject I never heard. No Christian minister could have presented Jesus as a character worthy the greatest reverence more eloquently or more powerfully than did this learned Hindoo, who told us that in this country on account of his dark skin he has been refused admission to hotels, and even barbers have sometimes objected to shave him. Is it any wonder that our "heathen" brethren never fail to make mention of this fact that even "our" Master was an Oriental?¹⁹

[Here was appended a section entitled, "A Few of the Sayings of Ramakrishna." Eleven sayings were given.]

It could well have been Swamiji's Christmas Day lecture, "Christ's Message to the World"—rather than "Christ, the Messenger," delivered nearly two weeks later at Payne's Hall—to which Miss MacLeod, impressed as much by his childlike simplicity as by his radiant and awesome power, refers in her reminiscences. "Swami lectured a great number of times at the Home of Truth and in various halls," she wrote, "but perhaps the most outstanding lecture I ever heard was his talk on 'Jesus of Nazareth,' when he seemed to radiate a white light from head to foot, so lost was he in the wonder and the power of Christ. I was so impressed with this obvious halo that I did not speak to him on the way back for fear of interrupting, as I thought, the great thoughts that were still in his mind. Suddenly he said to me, 'I know how it is done.' I said, 'How what is done?' 'How they make mulligatawny soup! They put a bay leaf in it,' he told me. That utter lack of self-consciousness, of self-importance, was perhaps one of his outstanding characteristics."²⁰ Indeed, Swamiji, as he himself had once said of his Master, was not "holy"; he had become *identified* with holiness.

Once relating this story to a monk of the Ramakrishna

Order—Swami Ashokananda—Miss MacLeod told more of Swamiji's sudden insight into the mysteries of mulligatawny soup, a dish, incidentally, of Tamil origin, whose name means "black-pepper water." "They put the bay leaf into it *afterward*, not before," Swamiji had exclaimed. "That is how they get the special flavour!"

(Swami Ashokananda later spoke of how a person of Swamiji's spiritual stature saw everything so permeated with the being and presence of divinity that the thought of such matters as mulligatawny soup could never interrupt or obstruct his thought of God. "Swamiji might go down deep in the thought of God and yet still think about the seasoning for this black-pepper water; and, conversely, from the thought of black-pepper water he could again plunge deep into the thought of God.")

Miss MacLeod also related the same story to Mme Paul Verdier, a fellow Vedantin, who very kindly gave me access to her notes. In this version, Miss MacLeod included the information that she and Swamiji had been *walking* back from the lecture on Christ to Mrs. Blodgett's, a detail that lends support to the view that the lecture had been given at the nearby Home of Truth rather than at the far more distant Payne's Hall.²¹ (She would have been walking, one thinks, a little behind Swamiji, for, as she told Swami Ashokananda, this was her custom. Jovial and easy though he was, one instinctively, naturally, treated him with deep respect. One felt always the essential majesty and profundity of his being.)

Another incident, which Miss MacLeod did not relate in her published reminiscences, but which she told to Mme Verdier, may also have reference to this same lecture on Christ. It took place, in any case, after a lecture or class during which Swamiji had risen to "a very high spiritual state." At the close a young man rushed forward and prostrated at Swamiji's feet, touching him. As though stung, Swamiji jumped back. "Don't *ever* do that!" he admonished him with vehemence; "Don't *ever* do that again!"²² Miss MacLeod gave no explanation. But as is

well known, in India at least, there is a state of spiritual exaltation, familiar to Avatars and saints, in which the touch of a hand even slightly soiled by the world can be painful in the extreme. Another explanation might be that the touch could communicate to the boy far more spiritual power than he would be able safely to contain.

Of Swamiji's eight class lectures at the Home of Truth (including his two classes of December 21 and 22 on "Applied Psychology") the only transcript that has come down to us is "Hints on Practical Spirituality"—which, as we have seen, may have been originally titled "Spiritual Breathing." Essentially, this class constituted a brief, succinct exposition of some aspects of raja yoga, as did, no doubt, others of the Mind-and-Its-Powers series, such as "Theory of Concentration" and "Practice of Concentration." Swamiji seems to have laid a good deal of emphasis in Los Angeles on the theory and practice of raja yoga, and Mr. Bransby was, in a sense, mistaken in saying that he did not give "short cuts into the Kingdom." The science of yoga was, precisely, a shortcut to perfection, a hastening by the individual of humanity's long-drawn-out evolution. But, to be sure, it was not an easy shortcut. "The Yogi becomes conscious of what he really is, God Himself," Swamiji said in "Hints on Practical Spirituality." "... But it is a terrible task. If a person wants to attain to this truth, he will have to do something more than to listen to lectures and take a few breathing exercises... Breathing, posturing, etc. are no doubt helps in Yoga; but they are merely physical. The great preparations are mental... He who desires a comfortable and nice life and at the same time wants to realise the Self is like the fool who, wanting to cross the river, caught hold of a crocodile, mistaking it for a log of wood. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and everything shall be added unto you.' This is the one great duty, this is renunciation."²³

As usual, Swamiji gave his message straight. He never temporized. Reverencing man as he did, he taught him the

highest of truths; he catered to no weakness, never lowered the ideal to please or comfort his listeners. He never belittled them, never deceived them, and when he saw fit he reproved them. Throughout "Hints on Practical Spirituality," Swamiji interspersed admonitions against smugness—a trait he had found prevalent in the Western world and evidently not absent in Los Angeles. "We are always making this mistake in judging others," he said; "we are always inclined to think that our little mental universe is all that is; our ethics, our morality, our sense of duty, our sense of utility, are the only things that are worth having. . . . Now, in judging others you must always define your terms of courage or greatness. The man whom I am criticising as not good may be wonderfully so in some points in which I am not."²⁴ Toward the end of the class this interwoven secondary theme reached a climax in a concept that he had touched on at Ridgely Manor but that one does not find stated so explicitly elsewhere in his published talks or writings: "We should look upon man in the most charitable light," he said, and continued with a passage as unexpected and as grand as a flash of lightning. "It is not so easy to be good. What are you but mere machines until you are free? Should you be proud because you are good? Certainly not. You are good because you cannot help it. Another is bad because he cannot help it. If you were in his position, who knows what you would have been? The woman in the street, or the thief in the jail, is the Christ that is being sacrificed that you may be a good man. Such is the law of balance. All the thieves and the murderers, all the unjust, the weakest, the wickedest, the devils, they all are my Christ! I owe a worship to the God Christ and to the demon Christ! That is my doctrine, I cannot help it. My salutation goes to the feet of the good, the saintly, and to the feet of the wicked and the devilish! They are all my teachers, all are my spiritual fathers, all are my Saviours. I may curse one and yet benefit by his failings; I may bless another and benefit by his good deeds. This is as true as that I stand here. I have to sneer at the woman walking in the

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

street, because society wants it! She, my Saviour, she, whose street-walking is the cause of the chastity of other women! Think of that. Think, men and women, of this question in your mind. It is a truth—a bare, bold truth! As I see more of the world, see more of men and women, this conviction grows stronger. Whom shall I blame? Whom shall I praise? Both sides of the shield must be seen.”²⁵

Many of Swamiji’s listeners must have been stunned. But to some, his emphasis on renunciation in this class and others came, perhaps, as a greater blow. Although there is no question that there were many seekers of spiritual truth among the followers of the various metaphysical schools that were proliferating in southern California at the close of the nineteenth century, there were also many unabashed seekers of worldly ends, who sought the kingdom of God *so that* everything else—health, wealth, and worldly success—would be added unto them. It was an attitude Swamiji repudiated with his every breath. “Live for an ideal,” he exhorted, “and leave no place in the mind for anything else. Let us put forth all our energies to acquire that which never fails—our spiritual perfection. . . . The less thought of the body, the better. For it is the body that drags us down.”²⁶

There was many a “metaphysician” who would have been none too pleased with this kind of advice, and indeed one finds a certain rancor growing in Mr. Bransby. It was perhaps after the class on “Hints on Practical Spirituality” that he asked (as we learn from Mrs. Hansbrough), “Swami, if all things are one, what is the difference between a cabbage and a man?” Swamiji’s answer was as sharp as the question had been taunting. “Stick a knife into your leg,” he replied, “and you will see the line of demarcation.”²⁷

“The missionaries were not the only ones who opposed Swamiji,” Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. “There were many teachers of metaphysics and many pseudoteachers who resented him or maliciously condemned him either because he was so far superior to them or because he exposed their

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

shallowness and 'spoiled their business' by teaching true metaphysics. Mr. Bransby was one of these, more or less. He was constantly finding fault with Swamiji. One of his criticisms was that Swamiji was breaking the rules of his Order by taking money. I later told this to Swamiji. He was chanting something at the time, and he stopped, smiled, and said, 'Yes, it is true; but when the rules don't suit me, I change them.'"²⁸

At the beginning of the year Swamiji moved his classes to Payne's Hall, a secular and uncommitted auditorium situated a block south of Blanchard Hall, above the Women's Exchange. In Mrs. Hansbrough's words, "We . . . moved from the chapel in the Home of Truth because Swamiji did not feel free to speak critically of metaphysical ideas from their platform."²⁹

By pondering over various confused and contradictory announcements in the Los Angeles papers, one is able to make out with a fair degree of certainty that Swamiji's classes at Payne's Hall were held on the mornings of January 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 at ten o'clock and that fifty cents admission was charged for each class. The titles of his talks of January 2, 3, and 6 were unannounced and are today unknown; but those of January 4 and 5 were, respectively, "What Brings Success" and "We Ourselves." The former of these two is, very probably, published in the *Complete Works* under the title "Work and Its Secret." The latter, a magnificent call to Self-realization, was the only class in the Payne's Hall series reported in the newspapers. The report, a curiously truncated one in the *Times* of January 6, corresponds in its entirety with the first two paragraphs of "The Open Secret," as published in the *Complete Works*. Thus, as has been pointed out in *Vedanta and the West* (No. 158), "The Open Secret" can be established as being a transcript of "We Ourselves." A further comparison of an early typescript of "We Ourselves" (which is in the archives of the Vedanta Society of Northern California) with "The Open Secret" removes any possibility of doubt on this point: from beginning to end the two transcriptions are, with

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

one or two exceptions, word for word the same. (The exceptions are small but not insignificant. For instance, where Swamiji is quoted in "The Open Secret" as saying "But let us repeat: 'I am It; I am It,'" he is quoted in the typescript of "We Ourselves" as saying more ringingly and rousingly "Stand up and say, 'I am He. I am He.'" This is perhaps too small a difference to mention; yet in those words "stand up" there resounds a vital note of Swamiji's message, a note that rings, indeed peals, throughout his entire mission—and perhaps nowhere so emphatically as in the lectures he was later to give in San Francisco.)

As its present title implies, "Work and Its Secret" was a class on karma yoga, and it was the only such class, as far as is known, that Swamiji held in southern California. It contained the essence of what he had taught on this subject during his first visit to the West—and more besides. Indeed, "Work and Its Secret" could be included in the book *Karma Yoga* without being redundant, for in this class Swamiji stressed a point that he had not dwelt on so explicitly in 1896. He spoke not so much of "nonattachment," a term liable to misconstruction in the West, as of "the power of detachment." "If only we had power to detach ourselves at will," he said, "there would not be any misery. That man alone will be able to get the best of nature who, having the power of attaching himself to a thing with all his energy, has also the power to detach himself when he should do so. The difficulty is that there must be as much power of attachment as that of detachment. . . . The wall never feels misery, the wall never loves, is never hurt; but it is the wall, after all. Surely it is better to be attached and caught, than to be a wall. Therefore the man who never loves, who is hard and stony, escaping most of the miseries of life, escapes also its joys. We do not want that. That is weakness, that is death."³⁰

The first week of 1900 was a full one for Swamiji. In addition to his five morning classes, he gave two evening lectures in the auditorium of the Blanchard Building. The first, delivered on

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Tuesday, January 2, was entitled "India and Its People" (or "The People of India"), and the second, delivered on Saturday, January 6, "The History of India." (Admission to each was twenty-five cents.) We are fortunate enough to have an account, or summary, of the first of these lectures, which a *Herald* reporter, though fretful because Swamiji had chosen not to wear his colorful robe and turban, managed to write. His article appeared on January 3 and is reprinted here for the first time:

TOLD ABOUT INDIA

Lecture last night at Blanchard Hall by Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda, member of an ancient order of Hindu monks, who is giving a series of lessons and lectures in this city, addressed an audience last night at Blanchard hall upon the "History of India" ["The People of India"]. The Swami appeared before his audience in American dress, losing to a great degree the peculiar and characteristic personality given him by the aesthetic silken robes and the turban worn by his order.

The speaker said India was not a country, but a continent containing a huge mass of races united by religion. India was of ancient date. It was inhabited, when through a desire to reach it by a shorter passage, Columbus discovered America, and its production of cotton, sugar, indigo and spices have enriched the world. This country inhabited by 200,000,000 of people, is full of little villages that extend through all the valleys and up the mountains thousands of feet above the sea level. The immense fertility of the soil owes much to the tremendous rainfall, which is often 1,800 inches [*sic*] in a season, averaging perhaps 600 inches. Many of the people, however, in spite of the abundant productions, live wholly on millet, a kind of cereal⁴; no animal food is eaten; no meat, eggs or fish.

The country from most ancient times has kept its

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

own customs, its own languages and its castes. It has by its religion saved itself while it has seen other sections [nations] rise and decay. The Babylonian civilization was not new, but India dates long before its rise and fall. The most ancient language, Sanskrit, is spoken by the priests, and was spoken once by all the different races. The speaker gave examples of many of our common English words coming from Sanskrit roots, and traced the old religious ideas and even mythology to the ancient Aryan races.

Many of the customs of the country were sketched, and further it was shown how this country was the seat of civilization, the center of arts, the sciences, the philosophical thought of the world.

The people of India have saved themselves by making a wall around themselves by making the castes absolute. An emperor in India is glad to trace his descent from a priest, who is the highest caste. The castes do not exist as they did once, but they are divided into many divisions and sub-divisions. There are hundreds of them. No people of different castes eat together, or cook together. Marriage is not legal if made outside of one's caste. The intricacy of the laws of caste is very great and branch out into the minutest detail. The poorest beggar or the viceroy of India may belong to the same caste.

Shoes are not allowed to be worn, as they are made from the skin of an animal. The women pay even more attention to these details than the men. All these customs have their philosophy. This is the true democracy, it is the socialistic idea, the development of the masses, not the individual.

The speaker closed with comparing the position of women in India with that of this country. In India the whole idea of womanhood is the mother. The mother is revered. She is the giver of life, the founder of the race.

The *Los Angeles Evening Express* also reported on "The People

of India.” But inasmuch as its article was short and added nothing to the above, the heading alone is given here, and this only by way of helping the present reader see the news as Los Angeles newspaper readers saw it:

MANY CUSTOMS OF INDIA ARE DESCRIBED

Swami Vivekananda Lectures About
the Ancient and Modern Prac-
tices in His Own Country

On the afternoon of Sunday, January 7, Swamiji delivered at Payne’s Hall what is today one of his best known lectures of that period: “Christ’s Message to the World” (published in the *Complete Works* as “Christ, the Messenger”). This lecture, which is unique in being Swamiji’s only published lecture on Christ, may have been given in response to requests that he repeat his Home of Truth lecture on the same subject; but it was not, we may be sure, a simple repetition. (“I can talk on the same subject,” Mrs. Hansbrough quotes him as having once said to Mr. Baumgardt, “but it will not be the same lecture.”)³¹ “Christ’s Message to the World” was replete, however, with the same feeling of reverence that (according to Mr. Bransby) had marked the Home of Truth lecture. He repudiated strongly the modern concept of Jesus as having been merely a great man in the humanistic sense. “One gets sick at heart,” he said, “at the different accounts of the life of the Christ that Western people give. I do not know what he was or what he was not! One would make him a great politician; another, perhaps, would make of him a great military general; another, a great patriotic Jew; and so on. Is there any warrant in the books for all such assumptions? The best commentary on the life of a great teacher is his own life. . . . Do you think that this mass of light, this God and not-man, came down to earth to be the brother of animals? And yet, people make him preach all sorts

of things. He had no sex ideas! He was a soul! Nothing but a soul—just working a body for the good of humanity; and that was all his relation to the body.... The ideal may be far away beyond us. But never mind, keep to the ideal. Let us confess that it is our ideal, but we cannot approach it yet.”³²

While Swamiji may at times have doubted the historicity of Jesus, he revered the highest Christian ideal as exemplified in the all-renouncing, totally selfless Christ. “It does not matter at all,” he said in the Payne’s Hall lecture, “whether the New Testament was written within five hundred years of his birth, nor does it matter even, how much of that life is true. But there is something behind it, something we want to imitate.... There must have been a nucleus, a tremendous power that came down. a marvellous manifestation of spiritual power—and of that we are speaking. It stands there.”³³ “My view of the great Prophet of Nazareth [himself an Oriental of Orientals] would be from the standpoint of the Orient,”³⁴ he said in this same lecture. And it may have come as a surprise to his audience that from that standpoint he revered and loved Christ with a fullness and intensity unsurpassed by any Christian saint. “Had I lived in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth,” Sister Nivedita quotes him as having once exclaimed, “I would have washed His feet, not with my tears, but with my heart’s blood!”³⁵

The *Los Angeles Times* of January 8 printed a fairly long and, as far as it went, excellent report of this Payne’s Hall lecture. We need not, however, reproduce the article here, for it adds nothing to the published transcript. Indeed, in its odd manner of editing Swamiji’s lectures, the *Times* simply cut off the text when space ran out, and in this particular case, space ran out about one-fourth of the way down. Fortunate we are to have what seems to be a full transcript in the *Complete Works*, for the last three-fourths of this unique lecture is the most moving, significant, and exalted part. However, the heading of the *Times* article, from which the published version evidently

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

derives its title, and the first paragraph of the text are of interest. They read as follows:

“CHRIST, THE MESSENGER.”

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON THE WORLD'S REDEEMER.

Hindu Preacher Speaks Before a Large Audience—Says the Poorest and the Meanest of Us Embody and Even Reflect God—Only Positive Worship That of the Man-God.

Swami Vivekananda, Hindu preacher and orator, and representative of Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions, delivered a discourse on “Christ, the Messenger” yesterday at 2:30 p.m., at No. 330½ South Broadway, before an audience that packed the house to its capacity. In the course of his discourse the speaker said: [The first quarter of the lecture follows.]

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, the house was not only packed to capacity that Sunday afternoon, but over a hundred people were turned away. Swamiji could draw large crowds—and he drew as well the inevitable money-minded impresario. In this latter connection, Mrs. Hansbrough tells of a crisis that took place on the platform of Payne's Hall. “The Mr. Blanchard for whom Blanchard Hall was named,” she related, “was present at this lecture, and the size of the audience was not lost on him. When the lecture was over, he came up to me on the platform, where Swamiji was talking to some people. ‘I would like to make some money out of this man—for him as well as for myself,’ he said. ‘Could I announce to the audience now that he will speak next Sunday at Blanchard Hall?’ I told him I could not give him such permission. He then went to Miss MacLeod, who did give him permission. So while Swamiji was still there, Mr. Blanchard announced from the platform that Swami Vivekananda would speak the following Sunday at Blanchard Hall and that the admission would be ten cents.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

"When Swamiji heard this announcement, he turned and asked who gave the man permission to make it. Somehow Miss MacLeod crawled out of it, and Swamiji turned on me. He was thoroughly annoyed and looked quite angry. He said the man should not have been allowed to make such an announcement. He pointed out that he had had no end of trouble trying to get rid of people who wanted to make money out of him. And he could not be persuaded to give the lecture at Blanchard Hall."³⁶ What Mr. Blanchard did by way of retracting his announcement, Mrs. Hansbrough did not say.

On January 7, the following brevity appeared in the *Times's* "City Briefs":

Swami Vivekananda, on "Applied Psychology," Jan. 8, 10 and 11, at 8 p.m. 330½ S. Broadway [Payne's Hall].

For reasons that are not entirely clear, Swamiji gave only the first lecture in this intended series of three on "Applied Psychology." It was entitled, "The Powers of the Mind," and a dated transcript of it has been published in the *Complete Works*. In this class, of which we shall have more to say later on, he once again stressed the extreme difficulty of the science of yoga. He had no wish to start a fad or lend support to those already existing in the name of metaphysics. "As with every other science," he said, "it is very difficult to make any great achievement, so also with this, nay much more. Yet most people think that these powers can be easily gained.... It requires rigorous training. People ask me why I do not give them practical lessons. Why, it is no joke. I stand upon this platform talking to you and you go home and find no benefit; nor do I. Then you say, 'It is all bosh.' It is because you wanted to make a bosh of it.... This science calls for more application than any business can ever require.... [Nor can it] be taught in lectures, for it is life; and life can only convey life. If there are any amongst you who are really determined to learn it, I shall be very glad to help them."³⁷

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Perhaps a general lack of seriousness in the attitude of Swamiji's Los Angeles audiences, a dilettantism that could have no place in the study and practice of raja yoga, was partly responsible for the fact that he discontinued this series of classes. In the last two sentences of "The Powers of the Mind," which have been omitted from the *Complete Works* but published in the *Brahmavadin* of September of 1901, he said (immediately following the above), "Well, I am very sorry to announce that, for several reasons, it has been thought best to drop this course of lectures altogether; so of this course, this is the first and the last. I am very thankful to you for all your kindness, and am so sorry that it should have to be dropped, but it has to be and there is no way out."³⁸

Searching through the Los Angeles newspapers, we find no announcements or reports to indicate that Swamiji again lectured in that city. This is not conclusive evidence, however, that he did not do so. Indeed, the following short paragraph from the *Los Angeles Times* of January 14, 1900, may indicate that there were one or two more lectures than we know of. (It seems also to indicate that as early as mid-January there was a plan in the wind for a visit to San Francisco; more than a month was to pass, however, before any such prospect materialized.)

Swami Vivekananda leaves shortly for San Francisco. He is without doubt one of the greatest oriental scholars to ever visit these shores, and has aroused the enthusiasm of the cultured people of the city. Those who have not been in attendance at his recent lectures will be interested in knowing that the Swami's mission in this country is not alone to teach philosophy, but to arouse interest in the establishment of industrial schools for the uplifting of the masses of India, these schools being on the same plan as our Pratt Institute.

Some of these "recent lectures" may have been given in

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

private homes; for generally it was to private gatherings, as at Mrs. Severance's, that Swamiji spoke of his hopes and needs for India. In any event, we know from a letter written by Mrs. Leggett to her husband that on January 12 he held a class at Mrs. Blodgett's. "We have had a morning class here, about 20 women," Betty Leggett wrote on that day, "and have been permeated with great associations through one of Swami's best talks. He reaches his apogee always in small companies, as you once said, and although his addresses here have been fine, he seems inspired to wander into any depth or altitude when away from the restrictions of a stated subject."³⁹ (It was possibly at this class that "like a simple child" he had asked Mrs. Leggett at its start, "What shall I say?")⁴⁰

Beyond verbal expressions of interest and sympathy, Swamiji seems to have received little outside help for the establishment of industrial schools in India. Indeed, even an organized effort by Betty Leggett to help his cause brought almost no financial response. Without his knowledge, Mrs. Leggett wrote from Los Angeles to a large number of his friends, asking them each to subscribe one hundred dollars a year for ten years for his Indian work. It was an earnestly conceived idea, but it was doomed from the start to failure. Indeed, it succeeded only in bringing disappointment to Betty Leggett herself⁴¹—and no little embarrassment to Swamiji. "[She] headed the list with her \$100 for 1900," he wrote to Sister Nivedita on February 15, "and got 2 others here to do the same. Then she went on writing letters to all my friends asking each to join in it. When she went on writing to Miss Muller I was rather shy—but she did it before I knew."⁴²

In her eagerness to be of help to Swamiji, Mrs. Leggett seems to have overlooked the intensity of Swamiji's friends in their relationship with him; they were never casual about it, and few could have welcomed the intervention of a third person in the matter of service to him. As for his acquaintances who had no deep interest in him or in his work,

nor cared with any fervor for India's regeneration, they could not have been expected to pledge a hundred dollars a year for ten years—no trifling sum in those days—at Mrs. Leggett's urging. All in all, her effort, as far as raising money was concerned, was wasted. The initial three hundred dollars was all that had come or ever would come of the plan.

Swamiji seems to have regretted particularly the letter to Mrs. Hale, whom he would not have asked for money through a third person, if at all. "A very polite but cold letter came [to Mrs. Leggett] in reply from Mrs. Hale, written by Mary, expressing their inability and assuring her of their love for me," he was to write to Nivedita in his letter of February 15. "I am afraid Mrs. Hale and Mary are displeased. But it was not my fault at all!!... Tell Mary when you see her next that I had nothing whatsoever to do with the proposal of \$100 a year subscription to Mrs. Hale. I am so grateful to them."⁴³ Yet Swamiji was touched by Betty Leggett's well-meant efforts. "I am not at all sorry that more people did not respond to your call," he later consoled her in a letter of March 17. "I knew they would not. But I am eternally thankful to you for all your kindness. May all blessings follow you and yours for ever."⁴⁴

As we have seen, Swamiji's need for money during this period had been urgent. During his first week or so in Los Angeles so desperate, in fact, had appeared to him the financial needs of the Math that an immediate return to India had seemed, after all, the best solution. "If anything is to be done in India," he had written to Mrs. Bull on December 12, "my presence is necessary." And he went on to assure her, "I am much better in health; possibly the sea will make me better.... Possibly Joe will help me out with the passage, and I have some money with Mr. Leggett. I have hopes of collecting some money in India yet.... If I cannot collect that—it is better to struggle and die for it than vegetate here in America.... As Mother wants it, so let it be. I am going to beg of Joe a passage via

San Francisco to India. If she gives it, I start immediately via Japan. It would take a month. In India, I think, I can raise some money to keep things straight or on a better footing.”⁴⁵

But if Swamiji “begged of Joe a passage,” she either could not give it, or, perhaps wisely, would not. He was only just beginning to show the benefits of “California ozone,” to say nothing of Mrs. Melton’s magnetic powers. And perhaps Swamiji himself soon changed his mind; for it had been just at this time that Mrs. Hansbrough and Helen Mead came to call and that, subsequently, his classes in Los Angeles began.

By December 23 (after the “Applied Psychology” classes) he could write to Sister Nivedita, “The wheel is turning up, Mother is working it up.”⁴⁶ And four days later, with a sudden air of relief, much as though a cloud had moved away, he wrote to Mrs. Bull, “I am much better in health—able enough to work once more. I have started work already, and have sent some money—Rs. 1,300 [about \$420] already—as expenses for the law suit. I shall send more, if they need it.”⁴⁷ And on January 17, after many more lectures and classes, he wrote (again to Mrs. Bull), “I have been able to remit Rs. 2,000 [about \$645] to Saradananda, with the help of Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Leggett. Of course they contributed the best part. The rest was got by lectures. . . . Well, I came here principally for health. I have got it—in addition I got Rs. 2,000 to defray the law expenses. Good.”⁴⁸ (According to her own memory, Miss MacLeod had been able to contribute a good deal. Years later she told Swami Ashokananda that one day in Los Angeles Swamiji had received a letter from India and seemed very depressed. She asked him what was wrong, and he answered that the Math had no money, his brothers not enough to eat. At once she told him that she had saved \$800 and would give it to him. This sum, coincidentally, was the same as that which she had earlier been able to give him in India for the *Udbodhan*.)⁴⁹

Two of Swamiji’s original purposes in coming to Los

Angeles—the restoration of his health and the collection of funds—had been accomplished. Now again he wanted to return to India. This time not to raise money or to expand his work, but to retire for good. In his letter of January 17 to Mrs. Bull, in whose counsel he had an almost childlike faith, he wrote: “It is becoming clearer to me—that I lay down all the concerns of the Math and for a time go back to my mother.”

She has suffered much through me [he continued]. I must try to smooth her last days. . . . I have become practical at least compared to the visionary dreams of Joe and Margot [both of whom had prophesied a “change in destiny” for Swamiji and India]. Let them work their dreams out for me—they are not more than dreams. I want to make out a trust-deed of the Math in the names of Saradananda, Brahmananda and yourself. I will do it as soon as I get the papers from Saradananda. Then I am quits. I want rest, a meal, a few books, and I want to do some scholarly work. Mother shows this light vividly now. . . . Joe and Margot are great souls, but to you Mother is now sending the light for my guidance. Do you see light? What do you advise? At least do not go out of this country without sending me home.⁵⁰

(There seems a strangeness in Swamiji’s wish at this time to include Mrs. Bull, an American woman, as a trustee of the Belur Math. Perhaps one of the reasons for his choice was her combination of deep devotion and business acumen. In a letter of December 27, 1899, he had written to her: “I want only some clear business head to take care of the details as I push onwards and work on. I am afraid it will be a long time to find such in India, and if there are any, they ought to be educated by somebody from the West.”⁵¹ Among Swamiji’s friends in the West who possessed both a clear business head and devotion to Sri Ramakrishna seems to have been only Mrs. Bull. “You have been one friend with whom Shri

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Ramakrishna has become the goal of life," he wrote to her in a letter of March 7, "that is the secret of my trust in you."⁵² However, as it turned out, by the time the terms of Swamiji's trust deed had been given more or less final form, Mrs. Bull's name had been dropped, perhaps at her own wish, from the list of trustees.)

As for his lecturing work in the West, Swamiji felt that, too, was done. "Now it occurs to me that my mission from the platform is finished, and I need not break my health again by that sort of work. . . . I cannot any more *tell* from the platform. . . . I am glad. I want rest; not that I am tired, but the next phase will be the *miraculous touch and not the tongue*—like Ramakrishna's. . . . I am resigned. Only get me out to India, won't you? Mother will make you do it, I am sure."⁵³

But the Divine Mother did no such thing. Her work in California was not yet done. As for Mrs. Bull's part, she, too, may have felt that from the standpoint of Swamiji's health the time had not come for him to return to India. It is indeed most likely that she consulted Swami Saradananda on this point. On February 22 the Swami wrote to her from India in reply to a letter of hers dated January 23 (by which time she could have received Swamiji's plea): "I cannot feel that this [is] the moment for the Swamiji to come back here. He will be dragged down again by all these family discussions [the legal trouble with Swamiji's aunt and her people?], unless he is perfectly self-adjusted."⁵⁴

In any event, Swamiji remained in southern California, reconciled to Mother's will—and perhaps to his own will, as well. There can be little doubt that if so great and free a soul as Swami Vivekananda had strongly wanted to leave California, nothing could have prevented him. His *mission* held him; and his mission, his inmost will, and the divine will were one. Despite his longing for total peace, which was beginning to grow more and more insistent as he approached the end of his life, he resigned himself to this threefold power—the same

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

that had brought him to earth. "I am afraid that the rest and peace I seek for will never come," he wrote to Sister Nivedita on January 24. "But Mother does good to others through me, at least some to my native land, and it is easier to be reconciled to one's fate as a sacrifice. . . . The great worship is going on—no one can see its meaning except that it is a great sacrifice. . . . I am determined now to be a willing one."⁵⁵

4

Almost from her first sight of Swamiji, Mrs. Hansbrough had what might be called a hunch. "Even before we had called on him," she related, "I one day said to my sisters, 'Do you know, I think Swami Vivekananda wants to come to visit us.' My sisters thought I was crazy. However, I defended my thought by pointing out that the Swami was not well and that he might find our home restful. We were then living in a rented house in Lincoln Park, which is now a part of South Pasadena."¹ Mrs. Hansbrough was not to be dissuaded by her sisters; on her first meeting with Swamiji she invited him to live with them. She was politely refused. "He was very gracious," she recalled. "I had told him that our home was very unpretentious, but that we would be very happy to have him with us. He smiled and said, 'I do not need luxury,' and explained that he was comfortably situated at Mrs. Blodgett's. Later on," Mrs. Hansbrough continued, "I asked him to come for Sunday dinner. He readily accepted and asked me to invite Miss MacLeod also."²

By a process of reasoning with which I need not trouble the reader, one can be fairly sure that this Sunday dinner took place either on December 24 or 31—either, that is, on Christmas or New Year's eve. And more likely than not, it was the clear, warm day of Christmas Eve; for according to Mrs. Hansbrough, the day of the dinner was sunny, and according to the Los Angeles papers, New Year's Eve was cloudy with a trace of rain. Let us say, then, until new evidence shows us to

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

be wrong, that Swamiji and Miss MacLeod first visited the Mead sisters on December 24.

"It was about an hour's ride on the electric train for them to reach our house," Mrs. Hansbrough said. "The train stopped just at the corner, and then they had only a few steps to our door. I can see the picture of them now, standing at the front door, so I must have met them when they arrived. After speaking to each of us as he came in, Swamiji turned and walked into the living room. The tall windows looked out through the trees in our garden. He walked to one of them and stood for some minutes looking out, the white curtains framing him against the sunlight. Then he turned and spoke, answering again the question I had asked him at Mrs. Blodgett's. 'Yes,' he said, 'I will come to visit you!' Then he wanted to come right away, and he soon did."³

What Mrs. Hansbrough meant by "soon" is not clear, but it is certain that Swamiji did not move to the Meads' house until after December 27, for on that date he was still heading his letters with Mrs. Blodgett's address and speaking of her as his hostess. Entangled in the problem of when he moved are a number of short visits with other people. For instance, we learn from Mrs. Hansbrough (and also from Mr. Bransby's letter to Mr. Allan) that he stayed for a week or so with "a wealthy family called the Stimsons, to whom Mrs. Blodgett had introduced him"; he stayed also for a few days with Mrs. Emeline F. Bowler, the president in 1900 of the Shakespeare Club, and one finds an item in the Pasadena Section of the *Los Angeles Times* of January 14 (to be given in full later on) which states that he was then the "guest of Mrs. J. [Jacob] C. Newton of South Pasadena."

According to an incident related in "Swamiji in Southern California," Swamiji's stay at the Meads' followed directly upon one or another of these visits—one that he had not particularly enjoyed. "One morning," the story reads, "... a horse carriage drew up in front of the Meads' house. To the surprise and delight of the sisters, Swamiji climbed out of it,

dropped his bags and baggage at the door, and announced: 'I have come to stay with you. That's too much of a lady!'"⁴ From whose home Swamiji was escaping and at what date this incident took place there is today no knowing. Indeed only one thing in regard to dates is certain: during most of January and February the Meads' house in South Pasadena was Swamiji's home—and with this fact, fuzzy at its outer edges, we must at present be content.

But before settling down with Swamiji's long stay at the Meads', we should make two excursions. The inhabitants of southern California, many of whom had come from the relatively flat and unscenic Midwest, were an excursion-loving people. They went by electric or steam train to the ocean, to the mountains, to the poppy fields, to the heartlands of the rich valleys, by boat to Catalina Island, and once a year, *en masse*, to Pasadena's New Year's Day Tournament of Roses. How many such excursions Swamiji undertook we do not know; perhaps not many, for according to Mrs. Hansbrough he did not particularly care for sightseeing. "Once when we were up on the range of hills not far from our house," she related, "my sister Helen was calling his attention to different views. 'Niece Helen,' he said (he always called her 'Niece Helen'), 'do not show me sights. I have seen the Himalayas! I would not go ten steps to see sights; but I would go a thousand miles to see a [great] human being!'"⁵ In that place and age, however, it was inevitable that Swamiji was taken on at least a few excursions, and of these, two have recently come to our knowledge.

"Tomorrow if it be fine," Miss MacLeod had written on December 15 to Sister Nivedita, "Mr & Mrs Baumgardt, Swami & I go to Mount Lowe where there is a fine observatory, and we shall have a rare sight looking through the telescope—& do some fine excursions in the neighborhood, returning home here about 5 on Sunday afternoon." As it had happened, December 16 had not been fine, and the outing had been postponed. It was not until the second weekend in January

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

that Swamiji made the trip up Mount Lowe, a high peak of the San Gabriel Range that rose just northeast of Pasadena.⁶

In a photograph taken unquestionably at Mount Lowe (not, as has generally been supposed, in Switzerland), one sees Swamiji standing in the very center of a funicular-load of excursionists and looking, at the moment, none too happy. The people around him are unidentified, but just behind his right shoulder appears a man whose photograph resembles one of Mr. Baumgardt. The funicular is about to ascend the first steep slope of the mountain by way of the Great Cable Incline, a track that climbed straight up for a dizzy half mile to Echo Summit—a small plateau from which one could halloo once and be answered by the friendly mountains thirteen times.

On Echo Summit perched the Echo Mountain House, a small but elaborate hotel, built in 1894. Because of its lofty location and odd manner of access, this white structure with its imposing dome and giant searchlight, salvaged from the Chicago Fair, was famous the world over and one of the marvels of the countryside—"a glorious landmark by day, a brilliant, flashing electric jewel by night, visible for miles and even at sea." Here, as we learn from the following item that appeared in the *Pasadena Star* of January 16, Swamiji stayed overnight—Saturday, January 13—and no doubt (though this we are not told) he, Mr. Baumgardt, Miss MacLeod, and Mrs. Leggett looked at the stars through the telescope at the nearby Lowe Observatory:

The guests of Echo Mountain House indulged in a social dance Saturday evening. Sunday morning, Swami Vivekananda, the Hindoo lecturer, gave a clever talk. In the evening the guests were entertained with songs by Mrs. Frances Lewis Hord.

Before being entertained with songs by Mrs. Frances Lewis Hord, Swamiji and his party completed the main part of the excursion. In the late morning or early afternoon of Sunday,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

January 14, they boarded a small trolley car, similar in appearance to the cable cars of San Francisco, and proceeded up the mountain. For three and a half miles the tracks of what was known as Mount Lowe Railroad snaked on a narrow roadbed around the mountain's face "in a hundred curves," traversed deep canyons on spindly supports, spanned ravines, and once simply looped out over empty space. The view was glorious. At length the excursionists arrived at a rustic hotel called Alpine Tavern and then continued (optionally) by horse or mule for a more gentle mile or so to the summit of Mount Lowe, some 5,000 feet above the valley floor. Whether Swamiji made this last part of the journey is not known, but in the late afternoon he and his party returned from Alpine Tavern to Echo Mountain House, gliding by force of gravity down and around the mountain in the sunset glow, "the thousand electric lights of the City of the Angels, twenty miles away, increasing in brilliancy as the night came on."

It is regrettable that the *Pasadena Star* (from which that quotation comes) could say no more about Swamiji's Sunday morning talk than it did. Yet for the *Star*, a homey paper given to daily repetitions of the same news, its small report was a masterly bit of journalism. Without it, moreover, we would not have known on what day Swamiji ascended the mountain, for no existing hotel register would have told us. Just three weeks after his stay at Echo Mountain House, that edifice, with all its seventy bedrooms, burned to the ground, sending up in the still morning air as flawless a pyramid of flame and smoke as the enthralled people of Pasadena had ever witnessed—"a fascinating scene," said the *Star*, "as viewed from this city."

Swamiji's excursion up Mount Lowe was followed almost immediately by a trip to Redlands, a small town some seventy miles east of Los Angeles. At the close of the nineteenth century Redlands, with a population of 4,800, was the showplace of southern California, outdoing in this respect even Pasadena. "For scenic beauty, both natural and artificial," one visitor

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

wrote, "there is only one Redlands." Terraced citrus groves, landscaped gardens, and spacious Victorian mansions graced the hills; snow-clad mountains towered to the north and east; the fertile valley, to the south and west, produced the very best of oranges; the climate was ideal the year round, and a large percentage of the people were retired millionaires. To this crown of southern California, Swamiji, Miss MacLeod, and Mrs. Leggett traveled by train on Tuesday, January 16. They had lunch at the grand and famous Casa Loma Hotel, and in the hotel register, preserved now in the vaults of the University of Redlands, one can find their names—all three written in Mrs. Leggett's hand. Nor did Swamiji's presence in Redlands go unremarked. The *Daily Facts* of January 16 printed the following item:

Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu, who is lecturing before the Shakespeare Club at Pasadena this week, visited this city today and drove to Canyon Crest Park.

Canyon Crest Park was the estate of the brothers A. H. and A. K. Smiley, who, in their generosity and to their regret, had opened it to the public. The Park was the crest jewel of the town, described as "transcendent in its uniqueness and beauty, and grand in its conception, affording a panorama that has few equals in any country." There were few superlatives not used in describing the horticulture, landscaping, and views of Canyon Crest Park, and fortunate it was that Swamiji visited it when he did, for crowds of tourists—"principally Eastern tourists," the Los Angeles papers said—were rapidly destroying it.

It is certain that Swamiji did not stay overnight at Redlands and most probable that he did not speak there, for on the evening of January 16 he had a lecture engagement at the Shakespeare Club in Pasadena. Thus we can assume that he, Miss MacLeod, and Mrs. Leggett left Redlands on the afternoon train. (Indeed, a mention of their trip in one of Betty

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Leggett's letters to her husband indicates that it was almost certainly a nine-hour sightseeing excursion on the then famous "Kite-Shaped Track."⁸ "See a new county every mile," a newspaper advertisement for this trip read. "Leave Los Angeles at 8:30 a.m. returning train arrives Los Angeles 5:47 p.m. Gives ample time at Redlands and Riverside for drives and sightseeing.") As far as we know, Swamiji went on no further excursions in southern California; rather, for the next three weeks he held classes and gave lectures in Pasadena almost daily, making the Meads' home his own.

The house stood at 309 Monterey Road in South Pasadena. It was a two-story frame house with gable roofs and a roofed-over front porch. Up the east end of the porch and over the roof grew a bushy Gold of Ophir rose vine, full of reddish yellow bloom. In a photograph published in *Vedanta and the West* (No. 158) one sees Swamiji standing at a corner of the house, the rose vine at his back, while Mrs. Wyckoff, standing on the porch, peeps from behind a pillar. Only a portion of the house is visible in this particular photograph; but in the book *Swami Turiyananda* by Swami Ritajananda (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1963) there is a full view of it. Clearly this latter photograph, which is reproduced here, was not taken during Swamiji's visit: the garden is untended and the rose vine less profuse. According to Mrs. Hansbrough's daughter, Mrs. Paul Cohn, who has told me her memories of the house, where she had spent many years of her childhood, there was a wide, well-kept lawn between the front porch and the road, in the middle of which grew a large pine tree. In later years, after the Mead family had moved away, the road was widened and the lawn thereby narrowed—and, as one sees in the photograph, let go to seed. "It was *never* so when we lived there!" Mrs. Cohn declared.

The house, today owned by the Vedanta Society of Southern California and carefully restored to its original state, is surprisingly small—a good deal smaller than it looks in its

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

photographs, and a good deal more charming, as well. Though redecorated in the late-Victorian style prevailing at the turn of the century, it has none of the clutter and stuffiness of that period; it is airy and gay and, despite its smallness, gives one a sense of space. Indeed, no visiting devotee would find it hard to think that Swamiji once walked through these rooms and filled this house through and through with his presence.

One enters a small but light-filled hall, which leads straight back into the dining room. To the right of the hall a recessed staircase rises to the second floor, and to the left, double sliding doors open wide into the living room. Here, in the living room, windows look out onto the front porch, and a windowed alcove at the far end looks to the east, where in Swamiji's time was an orange grove. The dining room, which opens without doors off the living room and which one can enter either this way or by way of the entrance hall, runs the full width of the house and is the largest room of all. (To judge from Mrs. Hansbrough's memories, it was also the most lived-in room. Here the sisters' father, Mr. Jesse Mead, had his screened-off bedroom, and here also the family and their guests sat in the evenings enjoying the warmth from the little fireplace, with its low and narrow mantel, often talking, when Swamiji was there at any rate, until late at night.) Beyond the dining room and centered at the back of the house is the kitchen, its gable roof a story lower than the roof proper, its back door opening in Swamiji's day onto a large back porch and adjoining wash-room. These three rooms and hall, with their redwood doors and woodwork, their high ceilings and tall windows, were (together with the front and back porches) all there was of the first floor.

Leading from the entrance hall, the narrow little stairway, lighted by a mullioned window, makes two right-angle turns to a diminutive hallway on the second floor. On the left are two bedrooms, the second twice as large as the first. On the right is the bathroom—a convenience that Mrs. Hansbrough once mentioned with special and pardonable pride. (In 1900,

she pointed out, an upstairs bathroom was no ordinary matter, particularly in a small-town house; and it was a boon to Swamiji.) At the end of the hall, catercornered on the right, is the door that led to Swamiji's bedroom—today a shrine. Some nine or ten feet square, this room has two windows in the far corner, one facing east, the other south. In the photograph here reproduced, one can see the east window, outside of which (Mrs. Cohn remembered) a large apricot tree grew. The south window looks over the kitchen roof and the back garden to a steep and wooded ridge. Indeed, the little house nestles almost at the foot of this southern ridge, which in 1900 was an uncultivated and unpeopled wildness.

In those days South Pasadena, a town separate in government from Pasadena, was not closely built up, and the Meads' house had ample space around it. At the back was the garden, where Mr. Mead grew vegetables, berries, and fruit trees; to the east, the orange grove; to the west, a neighboring house, hidden by shrubs and a large oak tree (upon which Mrs. Hansbrough's daughter had a swing); and across the unpaved road there were no houses at all. Although the electric train passed by at the corner now and then, Lincoln Park was a quiet section of the quiet little town, and as Swamiji told Mrs. Hansbrough, he found the atmosphere restful and not unlike that of India.

In America and England Swamiji had lived in many homes, sometimes making stays of several weeks; yet we have no really detailed accounts of his life at these places: we do not know the small, everyday things he did or the routine he generally followed. To a large extent, Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences" make up for this lack, and in the following pages I have drawn from them as many small details as possible regarding Swamiji's stay at the Meads'—what he ate, how he dressed, and so on. Some students of Swami Vivekananda may not care too much about such matters; but on the other hand, perhaps none of his present-day followers will find them insignificant.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Mead household consisted of Mr. Mead, his three daughters, his two grandchildren—Mrs. Hansbrough's daughter, Dorothy, who was four years old, and Mrs. Wyckoff's son, Ralph, who was seventeen—and the housekeeper, Miss Fairbanks. How so many people could fit comfortably into so small a house is a marvel. But even with guests, they managed with apparent ease. (Mrs. Hansbrough's daughter, Mrs. Paul Cohn, has shown me two photographs taken one day—possibly in the spring of 1901—when all the people who lived in the little house plus Swami Turiyananda, a Miss Minnie Boock, and a few others were on a picnic in the foothills of the nearby mountains. As far as I know, these two photographs are the only extant pictures of the Mead household as it was around the time of our story, and thus, with the kind permission of Mrs. Cohn, I am reproducing both photos here.)

During Swamiji's stay, the three sisters (and for a time Miss MacLeod) all slept in the larger of the two front bedrooms ("hospital style," Mrs. Hansbrough put it), giving to Swamiji, as we have seen, a room to himself. Old Mr. Mead (he was eighty-four) slept downstairs, Ralph in the smaller front bedroom, and Miss Fairbanks and Dorothy in the loftlike attic, which one reached, Mrs. Cohn remembered, by a narrow staircase between Swamiji's room and the bathroom. Thus in this populous house Swamiji had privacy, and in its friendly and relaxed atmosphere he could live as he pleased, without the ceremony, bothersome to him, of a more formal ménage. "Though he was very careful about his dress when he went out or met strangers," Mrs. Hansbrough said, "he was casual about it at home. He remarked one Sunday morning: 'Why should I be careful of my dress at home? I don't want to get married!' And once while my nephew Ralph was blacking his shoes, he said, 'You know, Ralph, this fine-lady business is a nuisance!' All the Western fussiness about there being a 'proper' dress for different times and places he put down as show."

Every morning around seven Swamiji would come downstairs in a worn black-and-white herringbone-tweed bathrobe, tied at the waist by a cord. His hair would be still tousled and damp from his bath—just as it had been in the mornings at Mrs. Blodgett's. As one can see from photographs taken of him at this period, it was fairly long. This was not by chance, but was, rather, a concession to popular demand. "His hair was beautifully wavy," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. "In fact, it was so beautiful and it set off his features so well that we would not let him cut it. Swamiji himself," she continued, "did not object. He was wholly devoid of self-consciousness."

Between the time Swamiji came down from his room and the start of breakfast he would walk alone in the secluded garden behind the house or along the almost equally secluded driveway at the side, sometimes singing or chanting, sometimes silent and absorbed. Breakfast was at seven-thirty, for Ralph was due at school at eight-thirty, and Helen, the youngest of the sisters (she was in her twenties), was due as early in Los Angeles, where she was secretary in an insurance firm. Swamiji ate a good, though light, American meal, consisting mainly of fruit, two eggs (he liked them poached), two pieces of toast, and two cups of coffee with sugar and cream. Mrs. Hansbrough once pressed upon him a third cup, persisting, until at last he said, "All right. Woman's business is to tempt man." But as a rule he was moderate in eating, drinking coffee, and smoking his pipe. (He no longer smoked cigars, as he had during his first visit to the West, and, like most men in those days, seldom smoked cigarettes.)

Although "Niece Helen" and Ralph had, perforce, to hurry away, Mrs. Hansbrough, Mrs. Wyckoff, and Swamiji made breakfast a leisurely meal. They never rushed. And afterward, on those rare days when Swamiji had no morning class, he would stroll again in the garden or browse through the library. "Often he would play with the children in the yard," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. "Dorothy had several friends who would come, and he would hold hands with them and play ring-

around-the-rosy and other games." No doubt Swamiji enjoyed these games for their own sake, as perfectly happy as his small companions; but he liked also to observe the ways of children and was interested in their early education. "He used to like to talk with them," Mrs. Hansbrough continued, "and would ask them many questions about their activities: why they played this game or that, and so on. He was much interested in the problem of child training, and we often discussed it. He did not believe in punishment. It had never helped him, he said, and added, 'I would never do anything to make a child afraid.'" Sometimes Swamiji would sit with the children in a shed in the back garden and look at their picture books. "He particularly enjoyed *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. He said that their portrayal of the processes of the human mind was absolutely correct and that Lewis Carroll had some kind of intuition—that his was not an ordinary mind—to have written those books." (Indeed, Swamiji thought *Alice in Wonderland* "the most wonderful book for children that has been written in this [the nineteenth] century." "There is no such thing as law or connection in this world, but we are thinking that there is a great deal of connection," he had said in 1896 during a New York class. "...The world is the same unconnected thing [as in] *Alice in Wonderland*—with no connection whatever.")⁹

One memorable morning—it must have been a weekend or a holiday, for Ralph had not rushed off to school—Swamiji suddenly laid aside his after-breakfast pipe and called Dorothy to him. Recalling this particular occasion, Mrs. Hansbrough related that her little girl went to him and stood between his knees with her hands on his thighs. "Swamiji put his hands at the back of her neck at the hairline and tapped up and over the top of her head to the eyebrows. Then he called Ralph and did the same thing. Ralph must have knelt, because I remember that Swamiji did not leave his seat." To Mrs. Hansbrough the moment was clearly a sacred one; it seemed that her daughter and nephew had received a special blessing, to which she gave

the name "baptism." But Swamiji himself gave no name to his act, nor would he explain it. "It is just a custom we have in India," was all he would say when Mrs. Hansbrough questioned him. And there, in silence, the moment ended.

Ralph loved Swamiji and served him personally whenever and however he could. He would shine his shoes, fetch his tobacco from upstairs, and do other little things that Swamiji asked of him. Often they used to talk together, and Mrs. Hansbrough remembered that once Swamiji asked Ralph: "Can you see your own eyes?" Ralph answered that he could not, except in a mirror. "God is like that," Swamiji told him. "He is as close as your own eyes. He is your own, even though you can't see Him." If one were able to talk with Ralph today, he could no doubt tell much else that Swamiji had said to him. But the time for searching out those memories passed long ago; for Ralph Wyckoff was accidentally killed when he was forty-two.

But while there were mornings when Swamiji was able to stroll leisurely in the garden or to talk with Dorothy and her friends, more often than not he held a ten o'clock class in nearby Pasadena. On such occasions he would leave the house around nine or nine-thirty, accompanied by Mrs. Hansbrough. He would wear his loose black coat and black hat and would carry in a suitcase his gerua robe and turban, into which he would later change. (As we have seen, he did not always wear his robe while lecturing, but apparently he sometimes did. Mrs. Hansbrough tells us that when Mrs. Bowler, the president of the Shakespeare Club, first invited him to speak, she specifically requested that he wear his turban. Swamiji obliged. "Don't you understand?" he explained to Mrs. Hansbrough, who had objected, "She wants the whole show!") To get to the Shakespeare Club, where Swamiji held most of his morning classes, was a simple matter. A few steps from the house he and Mrs. Hansbrough (and perhaps also Mrs. Wyckoff) could board the electric train and travel to Pasadena and thence up Fair Oaks Avenue directly to the clubhouse, which in those

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

days stood on the corner of Fair Oaks and Lincoln. It was a fairly short trip, and almost no walking was involved.

At other times, however, Swamiji may have taken walks for the sheer pleasure of it. He was feeling well, or at least much improved. "I am decidedly better in health," he wrote to Mrs. Bull on January 17. "The healer [Mrs. Melton] thinks I am now at liberty to go anywhere I choose; the process will go on and I shall completely recover in a few months. She insists on this, that I am cured already; only nature will have to work out the rest."¹⁰ Mrs. Melton had her ideas and methods; but it was a fact that during his stay at the Meads' Swamiji was not noticeably ill. "He always looked bright," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "especially when he was particularly interested in something. . . . Miss MacLeod said she had brought him West 'for his health,' but he never complained of ill health while he was with us. He never missed a meal or showed in any other way at that time that he was unwell."

Not only did Swamiji come to all meals, but he ate almost every kind of food, apparently without ill effect. As we have seen, he had a good breakfast. For lunch there was usually lamb (never beef), and there were vegetables, all sorts of which he liked, particularly peas. "In place of dessert," Mrs. Hansbrough remembered, "we would have fruit. He was especially fond of grapes." But some kinds of fruit he disliked. "We always had a plate of spring fruit on the table," she continued, "and one evening there were some guavas among the others. Swamiji was walking up and down in the dining room while the table was being set for dinner, and we were speaking of Lent and the custom of giving up some favorite food or pleasure during the forty days. He said that a similar custom existed in India which was always observed by the monks. 'All but the wicked fellows like me renounce something they like,' he said. 'Now I, for example, will renounce these guavas.' We took the hint and did not have guavas any more after that."

Often Swamiji would invite one person or another from his

morning class to lunch at the Meads'; and in addition, Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Leggett, who would come from Los Angeles to the classes, were frequent lunch guests. The conversations at these gatherings were lively and aglow with the wealth of insight he would bring to them. Sometimes, perhaps often, the talk would turn to India—to that land never far from his heart, to those people whose problems could at times plunge him into silent despair, at times wring from him some impassioned protest. "On one occasion when Mrs. Leggett was there," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "Swamiji, who was walking up and down, said that actually the English did not come to India to conquer the Hindus but to teach them. The great misfortune, however, was that the English soldiers—even the officers—were of such low caste. And he told of a time when he was sitting on the lawn in a park close to a footpath. Two soldiers passed by and one of them kicked him. Surprised, Swamiji said, 'Why did you do that?' 'Because I like to, you, dirty something-or-other!' 'Oh, we go much further than that,' Swamiji had retorted, 'we call you dirty *mlechchhas*!' Then he spoke of the raping of low-caste Hindu women by the English soldiers. 'If anyone should despoil the Englishman's home', he said, 'the Englishman would kill him, and rightly so. But the Hindu just sits and whines!'

"At this, Mrs. Leggett, who always agreed with everything Swamiji said, remarked in admiration of the gentle Hindu, 'How very nice!' 'Do you think,' Swamiji went on, 'that a handful of Englishmen could rule India if we had a militant spirit? I teach meat-eating throughout the length and breadth of India in the hope that we can build a militant spirit!'"

But the best lunches of all were the picnics that took place on the open top of the nearby hill. "We would make up a party of people who were attending Swamiji's classes more or less regularly," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "or he would even hold some of his smaller class groups there. Naturally the talk was always on spiritual subjects. You have seen that photograph of Swamiji in a picnic group; it was taken on top of

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

that hill." In this photograph, Swamiji is sitting cross-legged at what might be called the head of the picnic cloth; on his left sits Mrs. Hansbrough (identified by her daughter); behind him stands Mrs. Wyckoff; and on his right, a Mrs. Bruce (also identified by Mrs. Cohn). On either side one can see two or three of the guests—ladies with the long skirts, tight bodices, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and overburdened hats of the period. The photograph was taken at a relaxed moment; two of the women talk together, and Swamiji appears to be reading with amusement a scrap of paper, about the size of a fortune from a Chinese cookie, while Mrs. Bruce reads over his shoulder. To judge from the absence of coats, shawls, or wraps, the weather was pleasant, as it was almost every day that winter. "It was said to be the pleasantest winter in five years," Mrs. Hansbrough noted; and indeed, from the farmers' point of view the weather was altogether too pleasant; a drought was under way, and the ministers of the various churches in Pasadena were banding together to pray for rain.

Unhappily, there are no known records of Swamiji's talks and informal classes on this sunny hilltop. Yet from a snatch of conversation that Mrs. Hansbrough remembered, it is clear that he was seeing all the world—its good and its evil alike—as a divine play, all supremely Good. On one of the picnics a young woman, a Christian Scientist, put forth the belief that one should teach people to be good. Swamiji smiled and waved his hand to indicate the trees and the countryside. "Why should I desire to be 'good'?" he asked. "All this is His handiwork. Shall I apologize for His handiwork? If you want to reform John Doe, go and live with him; don't try to reform him. If you have any of the Divine Fire, he will catch it."

In those still, warm days of January, seated where they could overlook the rich valley with its escarpment of snow-peaked mountains, the picnickers listened to his words and felt themselves lifted into another level of existence altogether—a level in which they surely caught the "Divine Fire" that blazed in their midst. "When he had talked for some time,"

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Mrs. Hansbrough said, "the air would become surcharged with a spiritual atmosphere." And she spoke of one occasion in particular when, absorbed in some subject he was discussing, "he talked for six hours without interruption—from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon." "The air," she said, "was just vibrant with spirituality by the time it was over."

And what must the air have been like in the Meads' house! The sisters felt, as one of them later said, "as if Christ himself were in their midst."¹¹ Whatever he did, in his most relaxed or most active moments, his mind in its deep layers was plunged, consciously, in God; for such was his nature. And from those luminous depths he brought a power that not only charged the air with spirituality, but could transform the whole tenor of one's thought, change the direction of one's life, lift one's burden—and this as though it were the most natural thing on earth. He did not seem a superhuman, remote being, but one's very own. "Swamiji had marvelous patience with all of us," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. "He took away any feeling on our part that he was superior to us. Though some people found him aloof, I never did. I felt as though he was someone to whom I was closely related, someone whom I had not seen for a long, long time, and who had been a long time coming. I had felt I carried a burden—not on my back, but on my chest. After I met Swamiji I felt the lifting of the burden that had been on my chest for so long I had ceased to be conscious of it."

Better known and more concrete is the story of how Mrs. Wyckoff once experienced relief from physical and mental suffering just through contact with an object that had belonged to Swamiji—his pipe. "Sometime before Swamiji left South Pasadena," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "he said one day, 'I always leave something behind wherever I go. I am going to leave this pipe when I go to San Francisco.' He left it on the mantelpiece in the dining room, and we kept it there for a long time as an ornament. Then one day Mrs. Wyckoff picked it up. She had been suffering from some nervous ailment and had

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

been having personal difficulties in her life. For some days the pain of her illness had been almost unbearable, and this, added to her other troubles, made her feel extremely depressed. She went to the mantelpiece and picked up Swamiji's pipe. No sooner did she have it in her hand than she heard his voice saying, 'Is it so hard, madam?' For some reason she rubbed the pipe across her forehead, and instantly the suffering left her and a feeling of well-being came over her. After that we felt that the pipe should belong to her; and she still has it." (Today the pipe is in the possession of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.)

But the most significant miracle lay in the constant light Swamiji shed over the world around him. Those who were close to him remembered the small, apparently casual things he said and did with as much reverence as they remembered those words and acts more obviously fraught with superconsciousness. In his every gesture there was the quality of grace. To Mrs. Hansbrough it was, indeed, the everyday things that meant the most. "My inclination," she said, "has always been to remember him as the real human being he was—to take off any paint of artificiality others tried to apply to him. For he was so great in himself that no paint was ever needed to make him so." It was this steady miracle of grace, as much as the sudden, brilliant, and often dazzling bursts of power, that made the Mead sisters feel, from moment to moment, that Christ himself was there. The events of those days were not continually remarkable; rather, the days, the hours, were themselves transfigured, as is a lamp when it is lighted.

The routine was simple. After lunch Swamiji would generally recline on the couch in the living room, and there he would read or talk, while Mrs. Wyckoff busily pursued her various household tasks. "Madam," he one day said to her, "you work so hard that it makes me tired. Well, there have to be some Marthas, and you are a Martha."¹² And sometimes he would ask her to stop her work and stroll with him in the garden. Strolling, he would sing Bengali songs or chant Sanskrit verses

and "explain them," Mrs. Hansbrough tells us, "in a much more personal way than from the platform." Or sometimes he would sing the Christian hymn: "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone," the words of which Mrs. Hansbrough had taught him and which amused him greatly. "I am that heathen," he would laugh.

Perhaps Swamiji also did some writing in the afternoons. In his letter of December 27 to Mrs. Bull, he said, "I am sorry I could not write any more of the stories [which he had been working on in New York]. I have written some other things and mean to write something almost every day."¹³ And in another letter to Mrs. Bull that was probably written from South Pasadena in January (the date, December 22, 1899, which has been assigned to this letter in the *Complete Works* appears to be incorrect), he remarked, "I am doing some writing. . . ."¹⁴ But what Swamiji was writing at this time, we do not know; possibly he was jotting down Hindu legends for Sister Nivedita's use. "You have the Gopala already—add the Savitri story to that," he advised her in a heretofore unpublished note, which though undated was most probably written from southern California.

I send you four more herewith [he continued]. They ought to make a nice volume. Work on them a bit will you—if you get a publisher in Chicago all right, if not, Mr. Leggett promised to publish them some time ago.¹⁵

Referring no doubt to the "four more" of the above, he wrote to Nivedita in a now published letter, dated February 15, "I am glad you got the stories; re-write them if you think so—get them published if you find anybody to do it and take the proceeds, if any, for your work."¹⁶

Aside from writing stories, Swamiji wrote at least one poem during his stay in southern California. This, too, he sent to Nivedita. It was, almost certainly, the beautiful and now famous poem "Who Knows How Mother Plays," which opens:

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

"Perchance a prophet thou—/Who knows? Who dares touch/
The depths where Mother hides/ Her silent failless bolts!"
and closes: "To child may glories ope/ Which father never
dreamt;/ May thousandfold in daughter/ Her powers Mother
store."¹⁷ "Your birthday-poem reached me here last night,"
Nivedita replied on January 13. (January 12 was Swamiji's
birthday, not hers.) "There is nothing I could say about it
that would not seem commonplace: except that if your beautiful
wish were possible it would break my heart. . . . I cannot
conceive of perfect bliss without the assurance that [the
guru's] was greater. . . ." ¹⁸

Very likely, Swamiji would sometimes give private interviews in the afternoons or talk with visitors who came to see the Mead sisters. Yet he was by no means always in a mood for conversation. "A friend of the sisters came to visit one day," a story goes in "Swamiji in Southern California." "The ladies chatted for more than an hour while Swamiji sat in the parlor with them, smoking his pipe in perfect silence. Obviously the visitor had no idea who he was, because to the sisters' and Swamiji's vast amusement, she asked as she was leaving: 'Does this gentleman speak English?'" ¹⁹ Nor did Swamiji care to just sit in silence with everyone and anyone. There was the woman who was determined to do a portrait of him. "She had approached him several times after the meetings," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "but Swamiji had always declined. One day the woman came to our home and asked me if I would help her by letting her sketch him unawares. Somehow Swamiji sensed her presence and called me to him. 'You get that woman out of here or I'll leave!' he told me. Needless to say, I saw her to the door."

In the late afternoons Swamiji would help Mrs. Wyckoff prepare dinner, and often he himself cooked the whole meal. "He liked to prepare one meal every day while he was at our home in Lincoln Park," Mrs. Hansbrough said. "He cooked curries and often chapaties, of which Ralph and Dorothy used to be very fond. . . . Several of the ingredients that he used had to

be ground, and since he did not like to stand beside a table, he would sit cross-legged on the kitchen floor with a wooden butter bowl in front of him." After Swamiji had finished grinding his spices, he would proceed to fry them in butter, during which ceremony, as one learns from Brahmacharini Usha's article in *Vedanta and the West*, quantities of eye-smarting smoke would arise, distressing to the sisters. "Here comes grandpa!" Swamiji would cry out in warning. "Ladies are invited to leave."²⁰

As a rule, Mrs. Hansbrough said, Swamiji did not laugh and joke much. He was perhaps at his gayest when he had free run of the kitchen and was allowed to prepare for the family elaborate, and at times alarming, dishes. But to be with him even in his most merry of moments was to grow. He never sermonized; he simply opened one's eyes, and one rarely forgot those offhand lessons. Once when he asked Mrs. Wyckoff whether she liked a spicy dish he had created she said, politely, yes, she did indeed. But one could not fool Swamiji. After a moment's pause he inquired, "Was it true, or just for friendship's sake?" "I am afraid," Mrs. Wyckoff confessed, "It was for friendship's sake." "Another time," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "while Lalita [Mrs. Wyckoff] was preparing something in the kitchen for Swamiji, he was walking to and fro across the room. Suddenly he asked her, 'Were you happily married?' For a moment she hesitated, then she answered, 'Yes, Swamiji.' He left the kitchen for a moment and then came back. 'I am glad,' he said drily, 'that there was one happy marriage!'" Had he not, at that moment, wished to take a burden away? The moment passed. But as those who knew her in later years have testified, Mrs. Wyckoff became "a stickler for telling the truth" even in matters of small import.

Dinner in the Mead household was generally at six-thirty, and perhaps on those evenings when Swamiji was scheduled to lecture at eight o'clock, it was even earlier. The meal, as Mrs. Hansbrough remembered, was substantial. "We would usually have soup and either fish or meat, vegetables, and dessert—pie, perhaps, which Swamiji sometimes liked, or some other sweet.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

He did not, as a rule, take coffee in the evening." And often, of course, there were Swamiji's curries and chapaties and other dishes. After dinner, the table would be cleared, a fire would be lighted in the open grate, and the family and their guests would linger in the warm room; "some would sit at the table, others in easy chairs. We had an easy chair for Swamiji that was large enough for him to sit cross-legged in. He usually wore either what you would call a dinner jacket or a smoking jacket." The room, people-filled, fire-heated, and gas-lit, would sometimes grow too warm for him, and once when the flames had been allowed to die unnoticed, he gave forth a sudden hallelujah: "Praise the Lord! That fire's out!"

Among those who joined this family gathering was Miss MacLeod, who for a few days was a house guest of the Meads', sleeping, as we have seen, in the already crowded front bedroom. In Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences" one senses at times a certain impatience with Miss MacLeod. Yet when she was the Meads' guest, all friction seems to have disappeared. "She set aside her superior airs when she was with us," Mrs. Hansbrough remarked. "It was principally with people who affected the same airs that she put them on. And she never made the mistake of putting on airs with Swamiji. He often told her 'where to get off' when she had a tendency to be too high-toned. But the only time I ever heard him speak sharply to her was before a class in the ballroom of the Green Hotel [in Pasadena]. She was expressing an opinion as to what should be done about some phases of his work, and he suddenly turned on her. 'Keep quiet about what should be done!' he said. 'We will do whatever has to be done.' But he also said of her, 'Joe has a very sweet nature.' He always called her 'Joe.'" (Mrs. Hansbrough he called "Madam," and sometimes "Madam Moses," because, she said, of her fondness for law.) As for Joe, she readily admitted that Swamiji did not take her advice or accept her opinions without reservation. To Mary Hale she wrote in February of 1900, "Swamiji recognized my limitations when he said to me in California, 'You have never

been a worker, therefore your judgment is of little value in regard to workers.'"²¹

Any member of the intimate group who listened to Swamiji in the evenings after dinner could perhaps have written a book on those talks alone—but no one did. After forty years, however, Mrs. Hansbrough remembered a few details. "He would speak on a variety of subjects," she said, "—on philosophy, science, the development of the United States, and so on. He was very much interested in all phases of our national life; but he did not like to see the great concentration on material affairs. In private conversation he said that our civilization would fall within fifty years if we did not spiritualize it. He said we were deifying material values and that we could never build anything on such a basis."²²

Often during these evenings Swamiji would read aloud. He was, as Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, an excellent reader with a fine pronunciation of English. He read from various books, "and once when he was talking about Advaita, he asked for his 'Song of the Sannyasin,' which he read to us. On another occasion late one evening as we sat by the fire, he asked for 'The Need of a Guru' [from his book *Bhakti Yoga*]. He had been talking to Helen, and then he began to read from this. For some reason, after he had read for some time, Helen got up, lit his bedroom candle and offered it to him. 'Does that mean I must go to bed?' Swamiji asked. 'Well, it is eleven o'clock,' Helen replied. And so the conversation closed." "Niece Helen's" precipitous act was long remembered by all three sisters. "Long afterward we were talking of the incident," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "and all three of us felt that indirectly Swamiji had been inviting Helen to ask for discipleship. She said that she didn't know why she hadn't taken it; she just hadn't felt impelled to at the time"²³—which would seem something of an understatement.

Curiously, none of the Mead sisters took formal initiation from Swamiji or considered themselves to be, informally, his disciples. Mrs. Wyckoff and Helen later became disciples of

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Swami Turiyananda, who gave the former the Sanskrit name Lalita. As for Mrs. Hansbrough, Swamiji once put to her the question: "Why can't you join our Order?" Her answer was that she had her own little world to take care of. Later, she was given the name Shanti by Swami Turiyananda but did not become his disciple.

Yet while the Mead sisters may not, strictly speaking, have been Swamiji's disciples, they loved and served him devotedly, and they were indeed his own. "I have known all three of you before,"²⁴ he once said to them; and in a letter written to Mrs. Hansbrough from New York in the summer of 1900 he declared, "You three sisters have become a part of my mind forever."²⁵

5

In 1900 the town of Pasadena, then barely twenty-five years old, covered six square miles and was inhabited by 10,000 pleased people, most of whom had come from the Midwest and East. It contained in abundance citrus and olive groves, orchards, vineyards, and gardens, and boasted as well of many mansions set in landscaped grounds, nine excellent schools, several women's clubs, twenty-eight churches, and no saloons. "The people of this city are not greatly given to pleasure and hilarity," the *Pasadena Star* commented; "they may dissipate mildly by going to the Orpheum [vaudeville] on Saturday afternoon." Some—the mansion-dwellers—also dissipated mildly now and then by attending the cultural events in Los Angeles, making the ten-mile trip in the electric railway's "Poppy," a luxuriously appointed parlor car, equipped with a Brussels carpet, movable wicker armchairs, a kitchen, and, on request, a caterer. On the whole, however, Pasadenans stayed at home, for clearly there was no better place to be. Not only was their town sheltered by the motherly Sierra, cooled and aired by soft breeze from the Pacific, and nurtured by the fruitful valley, but it was "famed for its intellectual and artistic atmosphere and imaginativeness." The very

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

name of the town, its inhabitants concluded, quite wrongly, meant "'Gateway of Paradise'—Paso-de-Eden."¹

As far as can be determined from the contemporary newspapers, Swamiji's first lecture in this fair and happy city took place on the morning of Monday, January 15. It should be mentioned here, however, that in a letter published in the *Complete Works* and there dated December 22, he wrote to Mrs. Bull, "I am grinding on in Pasadena; hope some result will come out of my work here."² From this it would seem not only that Swamiji was lecturing in Pasadena by December 22, but that he had been lecturing there for some time. Yet there is no other indication that this was the case; there is, in fact, many an indication that it was *not* the case, and one is inclined to think that Swamiji's letter has been misdated. Indeed in the letter itself there is more than one hint that he wrote it in January of 1900. In any event, the newspapers of the day took the view that Swamiji's Pasadena work started with a lecture at the Green Hotel on January 15. In the Pasadena Section of the *Los Angeles Times* the following announcement appeared on January 14:

SWAMI IS COMING

Swami Vivekananda the Hindu philosopher who made a world-wide reputation during the Parliament of Religions at the time of the World's Fair at Chicago, is now a guest of Mrs. J. C. Newton of South Pasadena. He will speak in the Hotel Green parlors Monday [January 15] at 10 a.m. on 'Bhakti yoga, or the religion of Love.' The ladies of the Shakespeare Club will honor Vivekananda with a reception at their clubhouse next Saturday afternoon [January 20] from 3 to 5 o'clock.

During this same week Swamiji was scheduled to give two additional morning lectures at the Hotel Green (familiarily known as "the Green") and two evening lectures at the Shakespeare Club. Announcing these events, the *Pasadena Star*,

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

usually sparing with its headlines, let fly with the following:

THE SWAMI VIVE KANANDA.

An Illustrious Visitor in Pasadena.

The most conspicuous figure in the World's Congress of Religions at the World's Fair in Chicago was probably the great Indian teacher, The Swami Vive Kananda, who represented the Hindoo religion and aroused the people of Chicago to great enthusiasm by his charming and unique personality and his presentation of his country's religion.

The Swami Vive Kananda was a visitor in Pasadena today, lecturing to the guests of the Green this morning. He will give lectures here Wednesday and Friday at Hotel Green at ten a.m. and at the Shakespeare club tomorrow and Thursday at 8 p.m. A reception will be given him from three to five o'clock Saturday in the Shakespeare club rooms.³

Swamiji's five lectures of the week were also announced, as to date and place, in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Herald*—a fact that shows they were open to the public and that the people of Los Angeles were as welcome as those of Pasadena.

In its heyday the Green was as elegant a hotel as one could find anywhere in that age of elegant hotels. According to a Pasadena historian, writing in 1895, the mammoth edifice was awe-inspiring: "Its frontages are in Moorish and Roman architecture, but the dining room [which sported marble pillars and a vaulted ceiling] is a typical specimen of classic Greek style, and the whole structure, both internal and external has won fame as a grand symposium of the most imposing, elegant, chaste and esthetic elements of architectural science, scarcely excelled in New York or London except by mere bulk."⁴ Even in bulk this grandeur was not negligible.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Actually, the Green was two complete hotels, each, with its gardens, covering a whole block, and connected one to the other by an enclosed bridge, where every afternoon tea was served. At the date of this writing the Hotel Green still exists, but the East Wing, in whose theater Swamiji lectured, has been torn down, and the remaining wing, though enlarged shortly after 1900, is nothing at all in splendor compared to what it was.

Admission to Swamiji's three morning lectures, or classes, at the Green was free. As one learns from a letter written on January 19 by Betty Leggett to her husband, Swamiji's friends had suggested that he give a few talks in the theater of this most prominent hotel and that somehow a collection be taken for him at a later date.⁵ This scheme does not strike one as having been particularly sound financially, but as far as I know, a record of its results is not at present available. Nor does one know a great deal about the lectures themselves; indeed we know at present only the title—"Bhakti Yoga, or the Religion of Love." One glimpses, however, as through a lens momentarily unshuttered by Mrs. Hansbrough, a small incident that took place in the hotel, very possibly on the occasion of this first talk. "Professor Baumgardt was talking with some other gentlemen before the lecture began," she related. "One of them asked him, 'He is a Christianized Hindu, I suppose?' With considerable pride in Swamiji, Professor Baumgardt replied, 'No, he is an unconverted Hindu. You are going to hear about Hinduism from a *real* Hindu.'"⁶ Later on in the week, it was to become more than apparent how very real a Hindu Swamiji was.

We know more about the two lectures given on the evenings of January 16 and 18 at the Shakespeare Club than of those at the Green. The first of these (at which Swamiji obligingly wore his robe and turban) was on the subject of the religious legends of India, and a reporter, who seems to have been both baffled and impressed by the occasion, wrote an account of it for the *Los Angeles Times*. (This account, printed in the *Times* on

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

January 17, has been reproduced in its entirety in *Vedanta and the West* (No. 158) but will bear inclusion here, for it constitutes, to date, our most lengthy and comprehensive record of this particular talk.)

The Swami

Clad in his maroon robe, Swami Vivekananda addressed a small audience composed mostly of women, at the Shakespeare Club this evening [January 16]. He gave an account of the religious legends of Brahmanism, which are embodied in the daily lives of the Hindus, of the origin of Shiva and his surrender to the pure spirit of his wife, today the mother of all India, whose worship is carried to such an extent that no female animal can be killed. Vivekananda quoted freely from the Sanskrit, translating as he went along. Speaking in his soft, low voice, of the mysticism of subtle India to a little gathering of people listening with rapt attention to things of small significance to the uninitiated, the striking young Hindu scholar with the glow of the zealot on his swarthy face, was the center of an esoteric tableau.

At Swamiji's second lecture (January 18) the tableau was not so esoteric. As told in the introduction to the published version of this lecture, "Women of India," Swamiji declared at the outset that his chief difficulty that evening was that he did not know what subject he was to lecture on. "If you, ladies and gentlemen, will suggest anything," he said, "I will be very glad." At this point, Mrs. Hansbrough related, she noticed several women and a man conferring together. The man finally stood up and asked Swamiji if he would speak on Hindu women. The request was put in a goading way: "We would like to know the result of your philosophy," the gentleman said. "Has your philosophy and religion lifted your women above our women?" This was a trap into which Swamiji was certainly not going to step. "You see," he replied, "that is a

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

very invidious question: I like our women and your women too." The questioner was not to be put off. "Well," he said, "will you tell us about your women, their customs and education, and the position they hold in the family?" "Oh, yes," Swamiji replied; for the subject of Indian women, as such, was one he had often spoken on and in which he himself was deeply interested. "Those things I would be very glad to tell you. So you want to know about Indian women tonight and not philosophy and other things?"⁷

Thereupon Swamiji gave, extemporaneously as always, one of his most beautiful and comprehensive talks on Hindu women that we possess. He placed before his audience the age-old ideal of Hindu womanhood—the ideal of motherhood—"that marvellous, unselfish, all-suffering, ever-forgiving mother."⁸ It is only through the ideals of a people, he said at the outset, that those people could be correctly judged. "In each nation, man or woman represents an ideal consciously or unconsciously being worked out. The individual is the external expression of an ideal to be embodied. The collection of such individuals is the nation, which also represents a great ideal; toward that it is moving. And, therefore, it is rightly assumed that to understand a nation you must first understand its ideal, for each nation refuses to be judged by any other standard than its own."⁹ And at the close of the lecture, Swamiji spoke forcibly, eloquently of the great spiritual ideal underlying the life of his country: "The ideal of the Indian race is freedom of the soul. This world is nothing. It is a vision, a dream. This life is one of many millions like it. The whole of this nature is Maya, is phantasm, a pest house of phantasms."¹⁰

Mindful that in the audience sat critics of India, Swamiji did not spare them. "Western people," he thundered, "say what you have to say. This is your day. Onward, go on, babes; have your prattle out. This is the day of the babies, to prattle. We have learned our lesson, and are quiet. You have a little wealth today and you look down upon us. Well, this is your

day. Prattle, babes, prattle—this is the Hindu's attitude. The Lord of Lords is not to be attained by much frothy speech. . . . Says the Hindu, 'Yes, we have buried all the old nations of the earth and stand here to bury all the new races also, because our ideal is not this world, but the other. Just as your ideal is, so shall you be. If your ideal is mortal, if your ideal is of this earth, so shalt thou be. If your ideal is matter, matter shalt thou be. Behold! Our ideal is the Spirit. That alone exists. Nothing else exists, and like Him, we live for ever.'"¹¹

Certain members of Swamiji's audience were undoubtedly squirming in their seats. During the question period that followed, it became more than clear, Mrs. Hansbrough related, "that the group who had asked for this subject had done so in an attempt to trap Swamiji into saying something that would discredit him. We learned later," she added, "that they belonged to some church that had missionaries in India."¹²

The questions these people asked were the same old questions he had answered time and time again throughout his tour of the Middle West in 1894. They touched upon the alleged mistreatment of Hindu women, child marriages, early motherhood, infant-eating crocodiles, and so on. "One of the women in particular set out to corner Swamiji," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. "She started talking about how the English were trying to reform his country, and he simply said, 'Madam, I am a monk. What do I know about politics?' He answered several of the questions relating to Hindu marriage directly; then finally he said that the relationship between the husband and wife in India, where the basis of marriage was not physical enjoyment, was so entirely different from that between a married couple in the West that he did not think Western people could understand it. As the questioner continued to press him, Swamiji became really angry. It was the only time I ever saw him angry on the platform. At one point, to emphasize a statement he hit his knuckles on the table so hard that I really feared he would break the skin. 'No, madam,' he burst out, 'the relationship in which children creep into

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

life amid lust at night and in darkness, does not exist in India!

"Finally the woman openly called him a liar. 'Madam,' Swamiji replied, 'you evidently know more about India than I do. I am leaving the platform; please take it yourself!' He was thoroughly aroused. We had already gotten up, for we feared anything might happen now, and our only thought was to see him safely out of the building and home. He started up the middle aisle, but the woman blocked him and, with her friends, tried to continue the argument. Again he told her to take the platform herself. At last we got through, but as I passed her, the woman turned on me and exclaimed, 'You little fool! Don't you know he hates you?' I said no, I hadn't found that out yet."¹³

As far as we know, this unpleasant incident constituted Swamiji's only direct encounter with missionary groups during his second visit to the West. It was a minor skirmish. The days of serious battle in which he had taken on the forces of bigotry in America were over. With every weapon at their command they had attacked him, and with the sheer majesty and purity of his person he had cut at the root of their power. The story of his achievement in this respect has been told elsewhere (*Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*); we need only say here that in 1900 the more bigoted element among Christian missionary groups no longer constituted a force to be reckoned with. Yet, as we shall see later, Swamiji did not altogether omit a public rejoinder to the Pasadena attack.

The Shakespeare Club, where this collision took place and where Swamiji was to speak at least twelve more times during the following two weeks, was the queen of the town's women's clubs. Although it had been formed in 1888 for the purpose of studying the works of Shakespeare, its women were not afraid, as a contemporary historian noted, "to undertake any problem, no matter how intricate or how difficult." These numerous problems, "affecting themselves personally, the city and the public at large," occupied much of the ladies'

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

time;¹⁴ but Shakespeare was not thereby abandoned. Nor were other cultural pursuits: French and German Conversation Circles were held regularly, as were Art Study Classes, and now and then special days were celebrated, such as Ruskin Day, Newspaper Day, and William Morris Day.¹⁵

In 1900 the club, whose membership numbered around seventy-five, occupied a building known as the Stickney Memorial Building—a one-and-a-half story, vine-adorned, and many-gabled house, which looked, fittingly, much as though it had been transported from Stratford on Avon. The Assembly Hall, where Swamiji spoke, was an intimate, picture-hung room, with a dais for the speaker and rows of movable rattan chairs for the listeners. Although the Stickney Memorial Building has long since been demolished, the Shakespeare Club is today as active as ever, and through the kindness of its present (1965) secretary, I have been able to reproduce here photographs of the old clubhouse as Swamiji knew it and of the hall where he so often spoke.

Whether the club engaged Swamiji to lecture or whether the hall was rented or donated to him for the purpose is not made clear by any existing records. Toward the end of the first week of lectures the *Pasadena Star* noted several times: "The Swami will be pleased to lecture further next week if people will organize classes and each contribute what he is able to the support of the Industrial English schools in India, which the Swami Vivekananda is working for."¹⁶ Classes, all free of admission and open to the public, were organized the following week and, again, the week after that, but by whom we do not know. In the Shakespeare Club's 1900 *Year Book*, which briefly notes the programs for that year, Swamiji is not mentioned; nor were his classes announced in the club's daily newspaper notices. It would seem, then, that his talks were not considered a part of the club's activities. On the other hand, there is no doubt that many women of the club attended his classes, and it is certain that at least once Mrs. Bowler, the president, invited him to speak before the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

group. Further, the Shakespeare Club held for Swamiji a gala reception.

"Swami Vivekananda has been lionized by the club ladies of this city," read an item in the "Out of Town Society News" of the *Los Angeles Times* on January 21. "He was given receptions at the Shakespeare Club and at Hotel Green." Of the reception at the Green nothing further is known; but news of the Shakespeare Club reception was given in an item that appeared in the same paper on the same day:

The Shakespeareans.

The Shakespeare Club had the largest attendance of the year at its reception this afternoon [Saturday, January 20]. A recitation was given by Miss Lilian York, which was well received. Swami Vivekananda gave an exceedingly interesting lecture on Persian art, dwelling particularly on the architecture, the decorative art, the manufacture of shawls and carpets by the Persians, and also speaking of the philosophy of art. The ladies were delighted and at the close gave to the Swami a reception, serving refreshments. The Swami will give a series of lectures at the Shakespeare Clubhouse, beginning Monday at 10 a.m. and continuing every forenoon except Tuesday during the week.

The *Los Angeles Herald* of January 21 also commented on the reception:

Shakespeare reception.

The grandest and best attended reception of the season was held today at the Shakespeare clubrooms, Memorial hall, on Linden [Lincoln] avenue. The reception was tendered to the Swami Vivekananda. There were music and recitations, and then the guest of the occasion delivered a lecture upon the Persian art of making rugs, carpets, shawls and in decorations of the kinds in which the

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

natives of Persia excel. The lecture was highly instructive to those interested in these things and was received with many expressions of pleasure on the part of the ladies. The Persian was engaged [?] to deliver a series of lectures on kindred subjects during the week beginning on Monday and continuing at 10 o'clock every morning through the week, with the exception of Tuesday.

It is interesting to note that Swamiji gave a lecture on Persian art. While it is true that he could talk fascinatingly and with scholarly knowledge on almost any subject one could name, this was one of his few known public or semipublic talks in the West not on the topics of the religion, philosophy, history, or culture of India. Unfortunately, we know no more of it than that he gave it—and gave it with such thorough and sympathetic knowledge that he was assumed by some to be a Persian. (In the same way, whenever Swamiji spoke on Buddhism, some listeners took it for granted that he was a Buddhist.)

The announcement in the above newspaper items that Swami Vivekananda was to speak almost every morning of that week, beginning on Monday, January 22, was repeated in the *Times* and *Herald*, with the additional information that the subject for Monday would be "The Ideal of a Universal Religion."

This was a topic to which Swamiji gave much importance during his mission in the West. He had spoken on it often during his first visit to America, and he was to speak on it twice in Pasadena: once at the Shakespeare Club and again on Sunday evening, January 28, in the city's liberal pulpit, the Universalist Church. We have no transcript of the Shakespeare Club lecture, but the lecture given six days later at the Universalist Church has been published in volume two of the *Complete Works* under the title "The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion." It should again be noted that the few transcriptions we have of Swamiji's lectures in Pasadena (and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in Los Angeles, as well) are excellent ones. Whoever took them down—Helen Mead or the woman stenographer whom Mrs. Hansbrough mentioned—seems to have kept good pace with Swamiji, an ability not given to all.

In “The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion” (originally given under the more brief title “The Universal Religion”) Swamiji carried one of the key messages of his Master to the West Coast of America: the innate harmony of religions and the need for variety in the many paths by which men find their way to God. “Our watchword,” he said in conclusion, “will be acceptance, and not exclusion. Not only toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy, and I do not believe in it. . . . Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live? . . . We [must] take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. . . .”¹⁷

Although the titles of the week’s remaining classes at the Shakespeare Club were not announced in the newspapers, we learn from the following item that appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald* of January 26 that Thursday’s class was on the science of yoga:

Swami Vivekananda, the Oriental seer, lectured at the Shakespeare club this morning [Thursday, January 25] on “The Science of Yoga”. He said that there is no difference in kind between anything in nature, but that all differences are of degree merely. The mind is the supreme power, the motor of the world.

Further, we learn from the *Complete Works* that on Saturday, January 27, Swamiji closed his week’s series of classes with “My Life and Mission.” Once again, though this time for amicable reasons, the ladies and gentlemen in the audience preferred to hear something less demanding of their attention

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

than Vedanta philosophy. "Now, ladies and gentlemen," Swamiji is quoted as having said, "the subject for this morning was to have been the Vedanta Philosophy. That subject itself is interesting, but rather dry and very vast. Meanwhile, I have been asked by your president and some of the ladies and gentlemen here to tell them something about my work and what I have been doing."¹⁸ The talk that followed was unlike any other that has come down to us. As Swamiji himself said, "this will have been the first time in my life that I have spoken on [this] subject." He told of the ancient tradition of monasticism in India, of Sri Ramakrishna and his teachings, of the years of hard austerity undergone by himself and his brother disciples for the sake of spreading the message of their Master. He told of the extreme, heartbreaking, undeserved, and unnecessary poverty of the Hindu people and of his plan to transform the tremendous prestige and power of the Indian monk into a force that would educate and raise the masses. And he spoke of what he and his brothers had already accomplished along this line.

In the course of this lecture, Swamiji made a surprising statement—one which gives us some insight into how he felt his work in India, and perhaps in America also, should proceed in the future: "I must tell you," he said, "that I am not a very great believer in monastic systems. They have great merits, and also great defects. There should be a perfect balance between the monastics and the householders. But monasticism has absorbed all the power in India. We represent the greatest power [and you can only work in the line of least resistance]... But all the same so much power is not good there; better methods should be worked out."¹⁹

It was also in this lecture that Swamiji struck a blow at the missionary groups, so voluble in their criticisms of his Motherland. "We hear so much talk," he said, "about the sunken millions and the degraded women of India—but none come to our help. What do they say? They say, 'You can only be helped, you can only be good, by ceasing to be what you are.

It is useless to help Hindus.' These people do not know the history of races. . . . Take away a nation's institutions, customs and manners, and what will be left? They hold the nation together. But here comes the very learned foreign man, and he says, 'Look here; you give up all those institutions and customs of thousands of years and take my tom-fool tin pot and be happy.' This is all nonsense."²⁰

This was one of the few times Mrs. Hansbrough had heard Swamiji use slang in his lectures, and the words, as she repeated them some forty years later—"take my tom-fool tin pot and be happy! That is all you need"—had stuck indelibly in her mind, so effective, so telling had they been when he spoke them.

The impact of Swamiji's words upon his audience is hard to measure from the printed page. A simple sentence, a turn of phrase, could carry an incalculably high charge of thought. His criticisms as well as his exhortations struck deep; and he hesitated not at all to criticize when he saw fit. "One evening as we were going home after a lecture he asked me how I liked it," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. "He had been very outspoken that evening in criticisms of the West, and I said that I had enjoyed the lecture, but feared that he sometimes antagonized his audiences. He smiled as if that meant nothing to him. 'Madam,' he said, 'I have cleared whole halls in New York.'"²¹

As far as we know, no one stalked out, indignant, from the halls of Los Angeles or Pasadena when Swamiji touched the quick of the Western ego. But inevitably he made enemies, for inevitably fraudulence and hypocrisy stood exposed in his light. Readers familiar with his first visit in America will recall that one of the weapons used against him by those who feared him was scandal-mongering. In a small measure, it was the same in southern California. But Swamiji was as little disturbed by this in 1900 as he had been in 1894, perhaps even less so, for his work was now safely, unshakably established. "I think the finest gesture I ever saw him make," Mrs.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Hansbrough said, "was in connection with a rumor of scandal which arose about him while he was in Los Angeles. Professor and Mrs. Baumgardt came to see him one morning, and the subject came up in conversation. They had heard of it but thought nothing of it. We were all seated in the dining room except Swamiji, who was walking slowly up and down the floor. Finally he said, 'Well, what I am is written on my brow. If you can read it, you are blessed. If you cannot, the loss is yours, not mine.' "22

Many were those who were blessed—who appreciated his greatness and who came to hear him—and his classes continued in full swing. On January 28, an item in the *Los Angeles Times* read: "The Swami Vivekananda lectures the past week in the rooms of the Shakespeare Club have attracted club people to a very large extent. They will be continued next week. These lectures are free and have created considerable interest in religious matters in the Orient." From an often-repeated item in the *Pasadena Star*, as well as from lectures that have been published in the *Complete Works*, we can reconstruct the following schedule for this third week of Pasadena classes:

As we have seen, Swamiji lectured on Sunday, January 28, at the Universalist Church, taking as his subject "The Universal Religion." Apparently, he gave no lecture on Monday. On Tuesday evening he spoke at the Shakespeare Club on "The Aryan Race"; on Wednesday his subject was "The Ramayana"; on Thursday, "The Mahabharata"; on Friday, "Buddhistic India"; and on Saturday, "The Great Teachers of the World." With the exception of "The Aryan Race," transcripts of all these lectures have been published, "Buddhistic India" appearing for the first time in the *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* (and later incorporated in the 1964 edition of the third volume of the *Complete Works*), and the rest in volume four of the *Complete Works*. In this same volume one also finds two short, undated religious legends, "Jada Bharata" and "Prahlada," both of which, as one learns from the *Life*, Swamiji delivered in Pasadena. There are, to be sure, four lecture

mornings in Pasadena for which we have no titles and on any two of which Swamiji could have told these charming stories. (Or did he tell them during one of his informal hilltop classes, with someone taking notes?)

Swamiji was a master storyteller and often jeweled his lectures with Hindu legends, parables, and tales from the *Puranas*, not for the sake of adornment, but to highlight or illustrate some principle, to focus attention on some particular teaching. Rarely, however, did he devote an entire lecture to the telling of a story, and in this respect his "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana" are without parallel in the *Complete Works*. It should perhaps be mentioned here that they did not fall from Swamiji's lips in the same polished style in which they appear today. Before finding their way into print they were heavily edited by Charlotte Sevier, who served for many years at Mayavati as an assistant editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

The same is not true of "Buddhistic India." As published today,²³ this lecture stands as it was taken down. All Swamiji's fire and enthusiasm are there, immortalized, as it were, in his own informal yet powerful sentences that pour out as though a vast reservoir of ideas were pressing forward. He spoke of various socio-religious problems, to which, as is clear from his then recent Bengali work, *Prachya O Paschatya* ("East and West"), he had been giving much thought. One reads, for instance, his denunciation of an excess of monasticism and, more particularly, of nonresistance as a national policy. Speaking of the spread of Buddhistic monasticism, he said: "The real cause of the downfall [of India] is here. Monasticism is all very good for a few; but when you preach it in such a fashion that every man or woman who has a mind immediately gives up social life, when you find over the whole of India monasteries, some containing a hundred thousand monks, sometimes twenty thousand monks in one building—huge, gigantic buildings, these monasteries, scattered all over India and, of course, centres of learning, and all that—who were left to procreate progeny, to continue the race? Only

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

the weaklings. All the strong and vigorous minds went out. And then came national decay by the sheer loss of vigor. I will tell you of this marvellous brotherhood. It is great. But theory and idea is one thing and actual working is another thing. The idea is very great: practicing nonresistance and all that, but if all of us go out in the street and practice non-resistance, there would be very little left in this city. That is to say, the idea is all right, but nobody has yet found a practical solution how to attain it."

As was the case with almost all the lectures Swamiji gave at the Shakespeare Club, "The Great Teachers of the World" was unique. While he had given, and was still to give, separate lectures on one or another of the world's great Teachers—Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed—this lecture was, as far as is known, the only one in which he brought these Incarnations and Prophets together and pointed out the special contributions of each. He also pointed out, as he had done at other times, the divinity common to them all. "These great Teachers are the living Gods on this earth," he cried. "Whom else should we worship?... These divine men have been worshipped and will be worshipped so long as man is man. Therein is our faith, therein is our hope, of a reality. Of what avail is a mere mystical principle! The purpose and intent of what I have to say to you is this, that I have found it possible in my life to worship all of them, and to be ready for all that are yet to come."²⁴

One is tempted to go on quoting from Swamiji's lectures, for each sentence seems to reveal some new facet of his thought, some fresh and vigorous flashing of truth. But his lectures and classes are published elsewhere for all to read, and, for the time being at least, I shall forgo further quotations.

As far as we know, Swamiji's platform work in southern California came to an end with the close of his third week of lecturing in Pasadena. We now lose almost all knowledge of his activities for a period of nearly three weeks, at the end of

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

which we find him (on February 22) in San Francisco. What he did during those weeks may some day come to light, but at present we can only guess. Did he remain at the Meads' house? Did he continue his classes on the hill? Did he lecture in other small towns in southern California, making side trips here and there? His letters written during this period give us very little exact information; nor are Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences" of much help in this respect. As for the memoirs of Josephine MacLeod, they are equally unsatisfactory, and understandably so; for on the evening of Friday, February 2, she had left Los Angeles for a short visit in San Francisco and thence, joined by Mrs. Leggett, had gone on to New York. We are, in fact, afforded only one glimpse of Swamiji's life between February 3 and 22: it comes from the *Pasadena Star* of February 8. Midway down a column headed "Throop Notes" one finds the following paragraph:

The Swami Vivekananda visited the Institution Tuesday [February 6]. He was much pleased with the school, especially with the manual training department. He will probably visit the insititute again soon and he may introduce sloyd into his schools in India.

The *Star* was referring to the Throop Polytechnic Institute and Manual Training School, founded in 1891 by Amos G. Throop. In 1900 this school, "where boys and girls might be taught to use their hands and their brains simultaneously"²⁵—and practice *sloyd*, a word that means woodworking—occupied a sturdy brownstone building across the street from the Universalist Church in Pasadena. According to its own notices in the *Daily Star*, the Throop Institute offered "full instruction in usual studies from fourth grade through the college. Also courses in mechanical & architectural drawing . . . wood carving, clay modeling, free-hand drawing & water color, . . . sewing, cooking, wood work, forging, design and construction of machinery, [and was equipped with] Biological, Physical,

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chemical and Electrical laboratories." This thoroughgoing institute, whose enrollment then numbered 308, was one of the few schools of its kind in the United States. Its influence was to spread rapidly, and it was to grow apace into what is now Pasadena's famed California Institute of Technology, more familiarly known as "Cal Tech."

The Throop Institute represented one of the aspects of southern California that Swamiji no doubt liked—the spirit of enterprise and growth. But he liked also the area's then prevailing atmosphere of peace, which he had more than once likened to that of India. All in all, he found Los Angeles and its vicinity a "great field" for the propagation of Vedanta. "I am going soon to work in California," he had written to Mrs. Bull on December 27 (somewhat mystifyingly, for he had already started his classes); "when I leave I shall send for Turiyananda and make him work on the Pacific coast. I am sure here is a great field."²⁸ (When Swamiji left San Francisco in June of 1900, he did indeed send for his brother monk, asking him to take charge of the new-founded San Francisco Vedanta Society.)

Perhaps one of the factors that make a field great for the reception of spiritual thought is repose of mind, and this the people of southern California had to a marked degree. Although they were up and doing, thinking of ways and means to improve both themselves and their young cities, they were not under pressure. The land stretched wide and bountiful around them; they could see far and breathe deep. They were not, on the whole, particularly beset with, or concerned by, the social and economic ferments that boiled and frothed in the eastern cities; nor, as individuals, were they caught up in a round of compulsive activity. The middle classes felt no inordinate, consuming desire to make money; the newly rich were not obsessed by a longing to break into an established, ironclad Society; the poor were not compelled to struggle for life itself, and few people of any class seemed driven to feed endlessly on ideas for sustenance or to attend, for this purpose, one

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

lecture after another on any and every subject. There were, in fact, relatively few lectures to attend. But if southern California was lacking in the intellectual stimulus of, say, New York, it was rich in serenity. The slow tempo, the undemanding climate, the unfrenzied but unsluggish mood, the absence of the conflicts, tensions, and convoluted energies of a big city—and the absence, also, of a small town's chronic self-satisfaction and xenophobia—contributed to freeing the people's minds and hearts: they could feel and dream, and they could discover, or at least suspect, that life had a dimension in depth. Many were receptive to spiritual ideals, and some had the will to pursue them. This auspicious milieu, so favorable to expansion of soul, was perhaps responsible, at least in part, for Swamiji's assertion that California was "a great field."

He sowed it well. Some years after he had passed away, a Mrs. Annie Smith, whom he had known since the days of the Parliament of Religions, spent four years in Los Angeles and Pasadena and no doubt visited other sections of California as well. As is told in the *Life*, she later wrote that she had "found the spiritual seed of the Swami's planting springing up all over the Pacific coast, for he vitalized American religions and sects, as well as Hinduism."²⁷

For many years the growth of Swamiji's thought in southern California had no particular center of its own; it spread from mind to mind, from heart to heart, as disorganized as the spring season. This is not to say, however, that no attempt at organization had been made. As it happened, a Vedanta Society had been formed in Pasadena during Swamiji's stay there. "It was in the rooms of the Shakespeare Club," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "that the Pasadena Society was formed. [She did not remember the date.] I had suggested it, but Swamiji had no interest in organizing. 'It won't last,' he said. Nevertheless, we went ahead with the project. He was present at the organization meeting, but, as I say, he was not interested in the proceedings." Those proceedings, however, had their interesting moments. "I had drawn up a set of by-laws,"

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "which included a proposal that each member pledge to contribute to the Society for a period of ten years. Mrs. Bowler objected to this on the grounds that a member might die during the ten years. I said that that would be all right: the deceased member would then be excused from further contributions. Swamiji was greatly amused."²⁸

But while Swamiji may not have had much interest in the formation of the Pasadena Vedanta Society, we can be sure that it was not formed without his consent. Further, although he judged that this particular organization would not last, he knew that organization was essential to the furtherance of his Western work. "If you want to preach religion [in England or America]," he said in "My Life and Mission," "you will have to work through political methods—make organizations, societies, with voting, balloting, a president and so on, because that is the language, the method of the Western race."²⁹ Nor was Swamiji altogether without hope for the Pasadena Vedanta Society, and, as always, his primary hope in this connection was for the establishment of a two-way current of aid between India and America: spiritual help flowing from East to West, financial help from West to East. From New York he wrote on July 25, 1900, to his brother monk, Swami Turiyananda, who had just spent two weeks in southern California before going on to San Francisco, "Revive the clubs a bit and ask Mrs. Hansbrough to collect the dues as they fall and send them to India."³⁰ And again from Paris he wrote, "Don't be indifferent to the question of sending money to the Math. See that money goes certainly every month from Los Angeles and San Francisco."³¹ (Swamiji's use of the plural "clubs" in the first quotation may indicate that a Vedanta Society had been formed in Los Angeles as well as in Pasadena, and indeed there is evidence that this was the case.³² The word Los Angeles in Swamiji's second letter, however, did not necessarily refer to the city of Los Angeles. Then as now, the name was often used to designate a general area.)

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

For a time the "club" (or "clubs") survived, and as one learns from a short letter Swamiji was to write from India in June of 1901, the members made at least one contribution to the Math. Swamiji's letter, which has not been heretofore published, read in full as follows:

The Math

3rd June, 1901

Howrah Dist., Bengal, India

Dear Mrs Hansborough—the contribution of six pounds and three shillings to the Math by the Los Angeles club has duly reached. Swami Brahmananda will write to you a separate acknowledgement. But as I happen to be here just now and have not had long any direct communication with you—I feel like having a chat with you—like of yore—even though it be through the post. Now how are you and the Baby—and the holy Trinity—and the oldest who brings up the rear? [Grandfather Mead?]

How are all our Los Angeles friends? Poor Mrs Bowler I hear has passed away—she was an angel. Where is Miss Strickny—please tender her my sincerest love, gratitude and prayers when you meet her next.

How are all the San Francisco friends. How is our Madame [Mrs. Benjamin Aspinall]—the noble, the unselfish? What is she doing now? Quietly gone back to her Home of Truth work?

Are you pleased with Turiyananda and his work—is the [Shanti] Asrama progressing?

With everlasting love and blessings

Ever yours in the Lord^{ss}

Vivekananda

(Of Mrs. Aspinall and Shanti Ashrama there will be more in later chapters.)

Soon the Pasadena Vedanta society died out. And if there ever had been an organization in Los Angeles, it died as well.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

But, as said above, the seeds of Vedanta that Swamiji had sown went on germinating, and eventually, when the time was ripe, a strong and permanent Vedanta Society, founded in 1930 by Swami Prabhavananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, grew up in southern California and is today not only flourishing, but through the publication of a magazine, *Vedanta and the West* (at present suspended), as well as of many Vedantic books, has been circulating a knowledge of Vedanta throughout the United States.

6

Even if Swamiji had done no platform work in southern California but had simply moved among the people, simply lived and meditated in that land, his quickening influence would no doubt have spread, subtly but surely, for such was his spiritual power. Yet Swamiji did speak from the platforms of Los Angeles and Pasadena. He gave a message; and it will not do to close this chapter on his life and work in southern California without asking ourselves what, specifically, that message was. What was it he wanted to accomplish? Was he repeating on the Pacific Coast what he had taught during his first visit to the West, giving the same message in slightly different language to people who had not heard it before, and creating, as it were, a new center from which that message would spread? Yes, he was doing these things. But knowing Swamiji, one cannot rest satisfied with this interpretation alone.

He was anything but static. While his basic purpose remained constant throughout his mission ("My ideal can indeed be put into a few words," he once wrote in reply to a question, "and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life"),¹ the concepts that flowed like a living force from that single ideal were as endless in variety as the people to whom he gave them and the circumstances to which he applied them. Further, as Swamiji saw more and more of the multileveled needs of this world,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

his ideas of how best to fill those needs changed in both emphasis and expression. In the responsibility of his mission, never did he cease to agonize over the sufferings of man, and never did he cease to examine and reexamine his own concepts. Only three years had elapsed since he had left London at the close of 1896; yet in the course of those years how much had he not felt and thought! Even excluding the profound spiritual states he had known, one can still say that a world of experience separated his first and second visits to the West, and unless we think of him as stone (and we cannot), we cannot think that he would be saying exactly the same things in exactly the same way after his Indian mission as before.

Moreover, in California Swamiji, aware of his approaching death, knew he was giving his last public message to the Western people. It would seem inevitable, therefore, that he would deliver what he considered to be his essential teachings, that he would emphasize what he had come to feel was most important and give from his heart the heart of his mission. Indeed, when he was in the Bay Area, he was heard to say that he gave his highest teachings in California. When we take this statement in conjunction with another that he also made in California—"I only preach what is good for universal humanity"²—we cannot think that by "highest teachings" Swamiji meant something that applied only to a few highly advanced souls. It would seem, then, that this period of his mission was an exceedingly significant one, representing, in a sense, the essence of his teaching to all men everywhere; and it would seem well worth our while to ask what it was, specifically, that he emphasized. This question, of course, cannot be fully answered without taking into consideration his work in northern California, which was to follow, as well as that in southern California, and thus the scope of this present chapter precludes even an attempt at a full discussion. But through an analysis of his work in Los Angeles and Pasadena we should be able to make a beginning and to discover at least the general trend of his last words to us.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

No doubt if we possessed transcripts of all Swamiji's talks in southern California, the distinguishing mark of his work there would at once be obvious. Unfortunately, however, we have relatively few published lectures, and while several of these take their place among his most inspired and most valuable, and while some contain ideas not to be found elsewhere in the *Complete Works*, they do not by themselves enable us to come to a conclusion regarding the special nature of his work. To arrive at such a conclusion, we must take into account not only Swamiji's published lectures and classes but the titles (or the presumed subject matter) of those whose texts are lost to us. Thanks to the old Los Angeles newspapers, we are in a position to do this.

During his eight weeks of work in Los Angeles and Pasadena (December 8 to February 3) Swamiji gave, or intended to give, at least thirty-eight lectures and class talks. This number does not include his talk at Mrs. Severance's reception or his lecture on Persian art at the Shakespeare Club; nor does it include private talks in the homes of his friends, such as that mentioned by Mrs. Leggett in her letter of January 12 to her husband, or the picnic-classes on the hill in South Pasadena; nor does it, of course, include possible public lectures and classes of which we have no record at all. It does, however, include the two canceled lectures in his second series of "Applied Psychology," for we are interested here in Swamiji's *intent*, the trend of his thought, rather than in the incidents of his life.

Of these thirty-eight talks we know the titles, or at least the intended subject matter, of thirty-two; and of these thirty-two we have fourteen published transcripts and three fairly long newspaper reports (given earlier in full). While this information is admittedly not complete, it is not scanty, and it should, I think, provide us with a representative view of Swamiji's teachings during this period.

Breaking down our thirty-two titles according to subject, we find that he gave six lectures on the history, customs, and religion of India; five on religious legends (including "Jada

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Bharata” and “Prahlada”); three on the world’s great Teachers (including two on Christ); two on the ideal of a universal religion; one on Vedantic cosmology; one entitled “My Life and Mission”; one on “Reincarnation”; and an intended thirteen on practical spirituality, ten of which were to be devoted to raja yoga (two of these were canceled), one to karma yoga (“What Brings Success”), one to jnana yoga (“We Ourselves”), and one to bhakti yoga.

It is interesting to note—although this does not relate to our major theme—that Swamiji gave six lectures on India (three in Los Angeles and three in Pasadena). It had been long since he had dealt specifically with this subject in the West; indeed, roughly speaking, he had not done so since his mid-western and eastern lecture tours, which had ended at the beginning of 1895. In those days, as we have mentioned before, Swamiji’s purpose had been to destroy, root and branch, the misconceptions and misinterpretations of Hindu customs and religion then growing wild in America. This purpose had been served. Yet, one cannot forget that the people of southern California were, for the most part, children of the Midwest, over which religious prejudice hung like a heavy fog. Some had come trailing clouds of it, and the old fascination with heathen “idolatry” and the supposed ill-treatment of Hindu women was still upon them. In Pasadena, for instance, a missionary had returned from a reconnaissance trip to India full of gossip. Why, women had been seen prostrated before idols praying for the birth of a child! she was informing aghast church groups. Swamiji may have felt that a little correct information in regard to Indian customs and religion would not be out of place in southern California. One also finds him (in his lecture “Hints on Practical Spirituality”) stressing the need for broadness and fairness of mind in the judgment of others. He was not talking, we can be sure, without purpose. On the other hand, there is no reason not to think that at least some of his lectures on India were given in response to a

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

friendly interest in his country. Particularly would this seem true of "Aryan India" and "Buddhistic India," both delivered at the Shakespeare Club.

Yet, there was perhaps another and more important reason for these talks than the interest of his listeners. As any careful reader of the *Life* will have noticed, Swamiji's thought came back again and again—whatever his other concerns and occupations—to that object of his love, India. He was a profound student of his country; not only had he read extensively about its history, he had wandered after the death of his Master over the vast subcontinent, from north to south, east to west. Nor had his been a superficial wandering: he had observed deeply, analyzed, pondered; he had studied his country thoroughly—its past, its present, its possible future. Although in various memoirs and letters of that period one finds some expressions of his views, one cannot say definitely what thoughts about India he had formed in those early days. It is from the long letters he wrote to his brother monks and friends during his first visit to the West that we learn the conclusions he arrived at. There he gave not only his conception of the problems of his country, but also his ideas of how she could solve those problems and rise to a glory more lustrous, more world-illuminating than any she had known.

After Swamiji returned to India at the beginning of 1897, he set about putting his ideas into effect, organizing, as we have seen, the Ramakrishna Monastery on a firm basis and founding the Ramakrishna Mission—agencies through which his thought was to bear tangible and enduring fruit. But he had not yet finished studying India. Again he wandered here and there, giving lectures, visiting holy places, observing, pondering. He told many of his ideas of this period to Sister Nivedita, and it is through her books that one can learn his findings. There seems to have been scarcely a topic important to his country's welfare that he did not dwell upon; indeed, by the time Swamiji was ready to leave his Motherland in 1899 he appears to have once again studied her current

problems thoroughly, both in breadth and in depth, and to have given his final conclusions.

One would not, I think, be wrong in saying that as he sailed west he now fondly turned his mind to the past, to various periods of India's ancient history. To judge again from Nivedita's writings, he seems to have revolved the religious, cultural, and social problems of early times around and around in his thought, as though to shine his insight on all aspects of them, bringing their significance for the past, the present, and the future into full view. Thus one cannot think that it was simply for the pleasure and edification of the people of Pasadena that Swamiji spoke on Aryan India, on Buddhistic India, and on the India of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Puranas*. Rather, one cannot but believe that he chose these subjects (and, later on in San Francisco, the India of the *Bhagavad Gita*) because they were clamoring in his mind for formal expression—for resolution. As I mentioned earlier, the transcripts of his lectures "The Ramayana" and "The Mahabharata" were among those that were heavily edited by Mrs. Sevier—written over in red ink in her hand. The results are smooth-flowing, charmingly told tales; but it was all but impossible, as students of Swamiji's lectures and conversations well know, for him to dwell on the ancient, heroic legends of his country without giving them a turn and significance of his own. One suspects that much flavor and many "digressions" in which lay a wealth of thought have been deleted from the published versions of these talks. But however that may be, Swamiji's available and relatively unedited lectures on India's history (notably "Buddhistic India" and "The Gita—I") suffice to show how strong and persistent was the historical trend of his thought in California. Later on, he seems to have dwelt no longer on India's past. It was as though he had given voice to all that had stirred in his mind and heart in connection with his adored Motherland and was then satisfied, at peace.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

But to return to the main stream of Swamiji's thought in southern California, one thing that is strikingly clear in the above classification of his lectures is that he devoted almost none to philosophy as such. He did not give, as he had on the East Coast and in London, any detailed, closely reasoned, and well-organized philosophical discourses on Vedanta; he did not discuss at any length the three aspects, or stages, of Vedantic thought; he did not devote a lecture to a philosophical exposition of Advaita; he did not expound the theory of Maya; he did not attempt to reconcile science and religion; he did not discuss Sankhya psychology in any detail, nor did he dwell on Vedantic cosmology. (It is true that he gave one lecture on this last subject—his second lecture in Los Angeles, "The Cosmos," or "Kosmos." But this was delivered under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences and was the natural subject to choose for that assembly. As far as we know, he did not lecture on it again or mention it at any length.) In short, one finds that whatever Swamiji's purpose in southern California may have been, it was not to present Vedanta as the rational solution to the sociological, psychological, moral, and theological dilemmas of the modern world. In 1895 and 1896 he had given in detail his exegesis of Vedanta. There was no need to repeat it. Nor, one thinks, was he in a mood to repeat it, for another theme was dominant in his mind.

When his ship, the *Golconda*, had left Calcutta he had exclaimed to Sister Nivedita, as we have seen, "Yes! the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil like a man! Be wicked, if you must, on a great scale!"³ This "gospel," this conviction that in manliness lay the key to all achievement, spiritual and secular alike, was actually not new with Swamiji. Often he had voiced it during his first visit to the West. Yet his experience in India, his heartbroken witnessing of the failure of the Hindu people, sunk in the "virtuousness of death," to bestir themselves, had no doubt brought this particular aspect of his thought to a sharp, compelling focus.

It did not fade in prominence or vigor as he reached America. As Miss MacLeod wrote to Mrs. Bull from Ridgely Manor: "Swamiji is blessed and has his new message ready—that all there is in life is *character*, that Buddhas and Christs do more harm than good—for mankind is trying to imitate them—instead of developing its own character!"⁴ In these quotations from Sister Nivedita and Josephine MacLeod lies the clue, if one needs a clue, to the central theme running through Swamiji's mission in California. But his lectures, in fact, speak for themselves.

In Los Angeles, Swamiji held, or intended to hold, two series of three classes each on "Applied Psychology," which was, of course, raja yoga, or some aspects of it. Another series, "The Mind and Its Powers," included at least three classes on raja yoga: "Theory of Concentration," "Practice of Concentration," and "Spiritual Breathing." In addition, he held a class in Pasadena entitled "The Science of Yoga." In short, as we have noted before, he intended to devote ten talks to raja yoga—many more than to any other subject and many more proportionately than during his first visit to the West. One is inclined to think that in laying so much stress on the theory and practice of yoga Swamiji had a definite purpose in mind and that this purpose was, in a word, "man-making." In consonance with his "new gospel" he wanted to make man his own master, to teach him to be in full control of his body and mind, to give him self-confidence, to show him how to draw forth from within himself, *by himself*, all powers of earth and heaven and, step by step, to realize ultimately his identity with the infinite Spirit—Brahman. That this was the import of Swamiji's emphasis on raja yoga can be gathered from the two transcripts available to us: "Hints on Practical Spirituality" ("Spiritual Breathing"?) and "The Powers of the Mind." In both these classes his purpose is clearly stated; in fact, they serve as keys to the message uppermost in his mind.

In "Hints on Practical Spirituality" he explained briefly

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

the methods of gaining control over one's mind from top to bottom, conscious and unconscious. "The great task," he said, "is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him the complete master of himself." But control of the conscious and unconscious mind was only the first part of the study. The next part was to go beyond the conscious. "Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness. When this super-conscious state is reached, man becomes free and divine; death becomes immortality, weakness becomes infinite power, and iron bondage becomes liberty. That is the goal, the infinite realm of the superconscious."⁵

In "Powers of the Mind," the last class that Swamiji held in the city of Los Angeles, he stated his purpose in teaching the science of yoga even more clearly: "What you call the personal magncism of the man, that is what goes out and impresses you. . . . It is the real man, the personality of the man, that runs through us. Our actions are but effects. Actions must come when the man is there; the effect is bound to follow the cause. The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. . . . The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. The man who influences, who throws his magic, as it were, upon his fellow-beings, is a dynamo of power, and when that man is ready, he can do anything and everything he likes; that personality put upon anything will make it work. . . . The science of Yoga claims that it has discovered the laws which develop this personality, and by proper attention to those laws and methods, each one can grow and strengthen his personality."⁶ "The utility of this science," he continued in a key passage, "is to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave and tossing about in the ocean. This science wants you to be strong, to take the work in your own hand, instead of leaving it in the hands of nature, and get beyond this little life. That is the great idea."⁷

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

To do justice to Swamiji's theme in his two published classes on yoga, one would have to quote both almost in their entirety. But it is perhaps clear from the above that the development, or, rather, the drawing forth, of the perfect man was the goal he set before his listeners; and the development of self-control, self-confidence, and self-mastery was the basic means to that goal. From start to finish—from simple breathing exercises, to deep meditation, to the attainment of superconsciousness—man, where he stood at any given time, was the means, and man, infinite and eternal, was the end.

In Pasadena Swamiji held, as far as we know, only one class on the science of yoga, and of this we have no transcript. However, from its brief mention in the *Los Angeles Herald* (given in the previous section) it is clear that he again dealt with the mind and its powers, again laid emphasis on man's potential sovereignty: "The mind," he said, "is the supreme power, the motor of the world."

While Swamiji seems clearly to have felt that the science of yoga was the quickest and surest way to the making of a man, he did not confine his "new message" to his raja yoga classes. Inevitably, it pervaded almost all his work in southern California. As far as we know, he gave one class each on karma yoga and jnana yoga—though he did not so label them. While these classes—"What Brings Success" and "We, Ourselves" (entitled, respectively, in the *Complete Works* "The Secret of Work" and "The Open Secret")—cannot, strictly speaking, be classified under the science of man-making, man-making was their pervasive theme. In "What Brings Success" Swamiji's emphasis lay on the means to perfection: on self-effort, self-reliance, self-mastery, on the *power* of attachment and the *power* of detachment, and, above all, on selflessness. In short, his stress was on the strengthening of moral character. "Let us perfect the means," he cried at the close; "the end will take care of itself. For the world can be good and pure, only if our lives are good and pure. It is an effect,

and we are the means. Therefore, let us purify ourselves. Let us make ourselves perfect.”⁸

Again, the path was not an easy one. “I know the difficulties,” he said. “Tremendous they are, . . . we require super-divine power. Super-human power is not strong enough. Super-divine strength is the only way, the one way out.” But super-divine strength was not beyond man’s capacity. “It is very difficult,” Swamiji continued, “but we can overcome the difficulty by constant practice. We must learn that nothing can happen to us, unless we make ourselves susceptible to it. . . . This is the first lesson to learn: be determined not to curse anything outside, not to lay the blame upon any one outside, but be a man, stand up, lay the blame on yourself. You will find that is always true. Get hold of yourself.”⁹

In “We Ourselves,” Swamiji stressed the goal and the certainty of its attainment. Here lay the crux of his message, and it rang out like an anthem. If the cause of man’s failures lies within himself and nowhere else, hope and victory lie there too—and nowhere else. “The Infinite Being is also the same finite soul. The Infinite is caught, as it were, in the meshes of the intellect and apparently manifests as finite beings, but the reality remains unchanged. This is, therefore, true knowledge: that the Soul of our souls, the Reality that is within us, is That which is unchangeable, eternal, ever-blessed, ever-free. . . . Therefore, there is hope for all. None can die; none can be degraded for ever. Life is but a playground, however gross the play may be. However we may receive blows, and however knocked about we may be, the Soul is there and is never injured. We are that Infinite. . . . Be not afraid. Think not how many times you fail. Never mind. Time is infinite. Go forward: assert yourself again and again, and light must come. . . . Get hold of the Self, then. Stand up. Don’t be afraid. In the midst of all miseries and all weakness, let the Self come out, faint and imperceptible though it be at first. You will gain courage, and at last like a lion you will roar out, ‘I am He! I am He!’ ”¹⁰

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

"Get hold of yourself!" Swamiji urged in "What Brings Success." In "We Ourselves" he cried, "Get hold of the Self!" These two exhortations, interlocked, constituted in essence his religion of man-making.

(We have no transcript or report of Swamiji's only known lecture in southern California on "Bhakti Yoga, or the Religion of Love," which he gave at the Hotel Green. This is regrettable, as a talk on the path of devotion might seem to be an anomaly in the midst of so much emphasis on self-reliance and Self-discovery. Actually, however, there was no incompatibility between Swamiji's teaching of bhakti yoga and his call for self-mastery. His effort, in fact, had always been to cleanse the path of love, or devotion, of all weakness, fatuity, and beggarliness. Weakness in any form or guise was Swamiji's despair. In India, probably shortly before he had left for the West, he had said in sorrow to a narrow-hearted devotee, "Can anyone, my dear friend, have faith or resignation in the Lord, unless he himself is a hero?")¹¹

Swamiji's "new gospel" was not only explicit in his classes in southern California, but implicit in many of his lectures. (By "lectures" I mean all the talks that do not fall within the category of classes on spiritual practice—even though some of these "lectures" may actually have been class talks.) As the reader will have noticed, a number of Swamiji's lectures (in the sense explained) were not new in subject matter or treatment. With the exception, in fact, of his two talks on Christ, all of his known lectures in Los Angeles were, as far as can be judged from newspaper reports, similar to lectures he had given elsewhere. The opposite was true in Pasadena. There, with the exception of his two talks on the ideal of a universal religion, each of his known lectures was unique in one way or another: one finds nothing quite like them elsewhere in the *Complete Works*.

Swamiji's selection of subjects in Pasadena may have been guided, to some extent, by the likes and dislikes of the members

of the Shakespeare Club, who seem on the whole to have preferred stories to philosophy. But if his subjects and language were tuned to the ear of his listeners, the thought he conveyed was, of course, entirely a matter of his own choice. Indeed, he may have welcomed fresh and plastic forms upon which his "new message" could imprint itself more readily than upon forms conceived and developed to carry a different theme. In any event, it is in his new and unusual lectures that one finds the imprint of his man-making religion most sharply defined.

Perhaps the most striking examples of this are his lectures on Prophets and Divine Incarnations, namely, "Christ, the Messenger," "The Great Teachers of the World," and, in part, "Buddhistic India," which last we shall include in this category at present for the sake of convenience.

A question that may well have arisen in the minds of Swamiji's listeners was what part the Saviors of the world played in man's independent, self-propelled, and bold journey to Self-realization. This question Swamiji answered by his very choice of words: he did not call them "Saviors"; he called them "Teachers" or "Messengers." He could also have used the word "Exemplars," for they stand as the ideal, as he had said in "The Powers of the Mind," "towards which the whole [human race] is moving."¹² "We can grasp an idea only when it comes to us through a materialized ideal person," he now said in "The Great Teachers of the World." "We can understand the precept only through the example. Would to God that all of us were so developed that we would not require any example, would not require any person. But that we are not; and, naturally, the vast majority of mankind have put their souls at the feet of these extraordinary personalities, the Prophets, the Incarnations of God—Incarnations worshipped by the Christians, by the Buddhists, and by the Hindus."¹³ Again, it is only through such Incarnations that man can form some conception of God. "'No man hath seen God at any time, but through the Son.' And that is true,"

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Swamiji said in "Christ, the Messenger." "And where shall we see God but in the Son? It is true that you and I, and the poorest of us, the meanest even, embody that God, even reflect that God. The vibration of light is everywhere, omnipresent; but we have to strike the light of the lamp before we can see the light. The Omnipresent God of the universe cannot be seen until He is reflected by these giant lamps of the earth—the Prophets, the man-Gods, the Incarnations, the embodiments of God."¹⁴

Every Prophet and Incarnation the world has known was to be worshiped and loved as the highest ideal, "higher than all our conceptions of God"; but he was not to be abjectly followed, not superficially and mechanically imitated; for thereby the ideal, the great, shining life, was itself betrayed. Again one hears, through Miss MacLeod, his words at Ridgely Manor, "Buddhas and Christs do more harm than good—for mankind is trying to imitate them instead of developing its own character." "Think something!" he now cried in "The Great Teachers." "There is a tendency in us to revert to old ideas in religion. Let us think something new, even if it be wrong. It is better to do that. Why should you not try to hit the mark?...The cow never tells a lie, but she remains a cow, all the time. Do something! Think some thought; it doesn't matter whether you are right or wrong. But think something! Because my forefathers did not think this way, shall I sit down quietly and gradually lose my sense of feeling and my own thinking faculties? I may as well be dead!...So think something! Struggle Godward!...Light must come."¹⁵

As a teacher and exemplifier of the doctrine of man's innate ability to save himself, Buddha was, to Swamiji, perhaps the greatest Incarnation of all. In the midst of his lecture on "Buddhistic India" he became suddenly caught up in the magnificence of the man—he who had personified manliness at its highest. "Those last dying words of his always thrilled through my heart," he said. And telling of Buddha's last hours, he paraphrased his last message: "Weep not for me. Think

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

not for me. I am gone. Work out diligently your own salvation. Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you. What I am today is what I made myself. Do you struggle and make yourselves what I am.... Believe not because an old book is produced as an authority. Believe not because your fathers said [you should] believe the same. Believe not because other people like you believe it. Test everything, try everything, and then believe it, and if you find it for the good of many, give it to all.' ”

“See the sanity of the man,” Swamiji continued. “No gods, no angels, no demons—nobody. Nothing of the kind. Stern, sane, every brain-cell perfect and complete, even at the moment of death. No delusion. I do not agree with many of his doctrines. You may not. But in my opinion—oh, if I had only one drop of that strength! The sanest philosopher the world ever saw. Its best and sanest teacher.... Have no God [Buddha said]; have no soul; stand on your feet and do good for good’s sake—neither for fear of punishment nor for [the sake of] going anywhere. Stand sane and motiveless. The motive is: I want to do good, it is good to do good. Tremendous! Tremendous!”¹⁶

There stood the ideal—except that to Swamiji the source and ground of such manliness, and its goal as well, lay in the very thing Buddha denied: the permanent Self, “the real man, the infinite, the beginningless, the endless, the ever-blessed, the ever-free.”¹⁷

But though Swamiji differed in philosophy from Buddha, he was as realistic and bold a thinker as Buddha ever was, and like Buddha, he was intensely practical, directing more attention to the means than to the end. This aspect of his teaching was indeed part and parcel of “man-making.” In “What Brings Success,” one hears him say with Buddha-like sanity, “Our great defect in life is that we are so much drawn to the ideal, the goal is so much more enchanting, so much more alluring, so much bigger in our mental horizon, that we lose sight of the details altogether.... We forget that it is the cause that produces the effect; the effect cannot come by itself; and

unless the causes are exact, proper, and powerful, the effect will not be produced. Once the ideal is chosen and the means determined, we may almost let go the ideal, because we are sure it will be there when the means are perfected.”¹⁸ Swamiji never played with ideas, nor allowed anyone else to do so. “Why should I pay so much attention to my body?” Mrs. Hansbrough once asked him in Los Angeles, objecting, perhaps, to the early steps of spiritual practice. “It is only an old coat.” “All right,” he replied, “let me see you throw it off like an old coat. Then I will listen to you. You do not know what you are talking about.”¹⁹

“The Great Teachers of the World” was Swamiji’s last known lecture in southern California, and his closing words of that lecture were resounding ones, containing the very heart of his message: “Each one of these Teachers has been great; each one has left something for us; they have been our Gods. We salute them, we are their servants; and, all the same, we salute ourselves; for if they have been Prophets and children of God, we also are the same. They reached their perfection, and we are going to attain ours now. Remember the words of Jesus: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!’ This very moment let every one of us make a staunch resolution: ‘I will become a Prophet, I will become a messenger of Light, I will become a child of God, nay, I will become a God!’”²⁰

With those stirring words, behind which lay who can guess what power, Swamiji said good-bye to the people of southern California. At least, as far as we know, those were the last words he spoke from the platforms of that land.

One might say, correctly, that most of the things Swamiji said in southern California he had said before at one time or another. His teachings there were not brand new; nor was he some other person. He was still teaching the basic unity of religions and the need for a variety of sects; he was still teaching that God incarnates Himself on earth many times; he was still teaching that religion is the realization of God, nothing less, and that man is Divine Spirit, nothing less. And certainly his

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

teaching of self-reliance was not new; it had sounded from many a platform during his first visit to the West. The newness of Swamiji's message in southern California lay in his selection of certain ideas and ideals and in his concentrated emphasis upon them. His energies had gathered, as it were, behind those ideas, giving them the spearhead quality and immediacy of a "new gospel."

But as was mentioned at the outset, a full and clear picture of Swamiji's work in California cannot be gained without taking into account his teachings in northern California. It was not until he began lecturing in San Francisco and the Bay Area that the line of thought we have been trying to trace grew in power and substance and that his last message to the West sounded forth with unmistakable clarity. But this is a subject belonging to a later chapter.

Just as Swamiji's work in southern California marked the beginning of a new, and final, phase in his teaching mission, so his stay there marked a turning point, or rather the beginning of a transitional period, in his life. He began during those weeks to move from active leadership in the organizational aspect of his work toward retirement, from an intense, often impatient, and always powerful, expenditure of energy toward the profound serenity that was to characterize his last two years on earth. It is not that Swamiji was to change in any basic way. However active he may have been at any given time, the larger part of his mind had always been steeped in the consciousness of God. Indeed, throughout his life Swamiji was actually more contemplative than active. "Narendra is a great soul," Sri Ramakrishna had said of him not long after their first meeting, "perfect in meditation."²¹ And how often was not Swamiji lost in samadhi! Reading of how much he accomplished in so short a time, one sometimes thinks of him as the "cyclonic" monk, forgetting that he worked with his mind always in a state bordering on profound meditation. His was the power to act with hurricane intensity from a level of intense

stillness—a power (and an agony, as well) given only to World Teachers and World Movers. And such he was. But the hurricane was now over. One can perhaps liken Swamiji to a vast ocean, ever serene in its depths, yet lashed on its surface from time to time into towering waves. The force of his compassion had driven him to inundate the world with spirituality, and never had the waves of his mission been higher, more massive than during his two years of work in India—and never had their thunderous breaking against the cliffs of the world been more painful, physically and mentally, to Swamiji himself. He had accomplished his task. And now in Los Angeles, and particularly it would seem in Pasadena, the waters, to speak still in metaphor, were beginning to subside to their natural state of calm, leveling out into the expanse of a horizonless sea. As his health improved, as he earned money for the relief of the Math, as he found peace in teaching, and, above all, as he knew with an inner certainty that the main part of his work was done, his mind gravitated toward retirement; and retirement for Swamiji—what could it mean but a return to that absolute, unconditioned freedom whence he had come? In the months that were to follow, he was to move further and further toward that peace, “the eternal Silence.” But even at the end of his stay in southern California the wounds, for they were indeed wounds, sustained during his mission were healing. He could write to Sister Nivedita, “I am strong now, Margo, stronger than ever I was mentally. I was mentally getting a sort of ironing over my heart. I am getting nearer a Sannyasin’s life now.”²² And to Mrs. Bull he wrote on the same day (February 15), “I have not done much work, but my heart is growing stronger every day, physically and mentally. Some days I feel I can bear everything and suffer everything.... I can always work better alone, and am physically and mentally best when entirely alone! I scarcely had a day’s illness during my eight years of lone life away from my brethren. Now I am again getting up, being alone. Strange, but that is what Mother wants me to be. ‘Wandering alone like the rhinoceros’.... I am

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

so ashamed of myself—of this display of weakness for the last two years! Glad it is ended.”²³

Less than a week after writing the above, Swamiji left southern California for the city of San Francisco, some four hundred miles to the north.

CHAPTER FIVE

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

1

In the twilight of Thursday, February 22, 1900, Swami Vivekananda, after traveling a night and a day from Los Angeles, alighted from a Southern Pacific train at the Oakland mole. Mrs. Hansbrough, who had come north a week earlier, was there to meet him, and together they boarded a waiting ferryboat for the twenty-minute trip across the Bay. As the boat neared the western shore, Swamiji, surely standing awhile in the salty wind of the deck, looked for the first time upon the massed hills of San Francisco that rose, sprinkled now with lights, behind the tall, gray stone tower of the new Ferry Building. Arriving at the wharf, the ferry, backing water, bumped and creaked against the piles of its slip, sea gulls rose protesting into the air, and with a rattle and clank of chains a wooden ramp was lowered onto the boat's wide bow. Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough disembarked, passed with the tramping crowd through the Ferry Building, and emerged into bedlam. Streetcars, both cable- and horse-drawn, hotel buses, and hackney cabs jammed the foot of Market Street; and shouting newsboys, peddlers, agents, cabbies, and redcaps swarmed around the new arrivals, each demanding full attention. Mrs. Hansbrough no doubt fended off this clamoring assault, helped Swamiji claim his luggage, and (no doubt) chose a cab that would take them quickly, the horse clapping over cobbled streets, into the quiet depths of the darkening city. Their destination was the Home of Truth, housed on Pine Street between Hyde and Leavenworth, on the lower southwest slope of Nob Hill. There Mrs. Hansbrough had arranged for Swamiji to stay, and there dinner now awaited him.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

The world to which Swamiji had come was a very different one from that of southern California. The city of San Francisco, unlike Los Angeles of the period, was a true city, cosmopolitan, urbane, full of vigorous life and variety. Not only was it the undisputed business, financial, and cultural center of the entire western part of the United States, but it was renowned the world over for its air of sophisticated, lighthearted gaiety. The city had grown fast. Scarcely more than half a century earlier it had contained about four hundred and fifty people—mostly men. In 1900 its population stood at almost 343,000, and its area had extended steadily, reclaiming the mud flats of the Bay, climbing the hills, spreading over the sand dunes. Architecturally, San Francisco was not lovely. The downtown district, lying between the Embarcadero and the hills, was gray and drab, crowded with three-, four-, and five-storied buildings of wood or brick, mostly boxlike and flat-roofed. Only a few skyscrapers stood out here and there, all of them out-classed by the Call Building, whose domed tower rose a spectacular nineteen stories above Market and Kearny streets. Atop Nob Hill the pretentious and ornate mansions that had been built in the seventies by the newly rich silver and railroad kings were, with one or two exceptions, monstrous blunders. And if some of the smaller mansions, beyond Van Ness Avenue, with their cupolas and turrets, were more gracious, the rows of narrow bay-windowed houses and flats that each year stretched out farther to the west were singularly dreary.

Yet if San Francisco was on the whole architecturally drab, or, as some would have it, plain ugly, this defect was more than made up for by the beauty of its setting. To the north and east lay its wide Bay, jeweled by Alcatraz and Goat islands, surrounded by mauve mountains and golden hills that turned emerald in the spring, and guarded by cliff-bound straits. To the west lay the Pacific Ocean, to the south, the gentle hills of the Peninsula. The panorama constantly changed its appearance in the varying light; indeed, it often disappeared altogether, lost in the gray fog that came sweeping over the

city from the sea. But San Franciscans were as happy with the fog as with the view, for it, too, was exclusively their own. They were happy with many other things as well. They made excursions to the palatial Cliff House that literally overhung the ocean and from which one could watch the sea lions barking and lolling on Seal Rocks; they strolled in the nearby statue-laden gardens of Sutro Heights and swam in the immense, glass-roofed Sutro Baths. They were proud of their Golden Gate Park that had been lovingly coaxed to grow in the face of sand and wind, of their forested Presidio and their celebrity-filled Palace Hotel. They were enchanted by their foreign quarters: festive Little Italy, ramshackle Little Mexico, and Chinatown, sinister and mysterious. They were charmed with their flower stalls that graced almost every downtown corner with a riot of color, with their jaunty little cable cars that fearlessly ascended and descended precipitous hills, with their sedate ferries, their flocks of lateen-rigged fishing boats, and their tall-masted ships and funneled steamboats lying at dock along the Embarcadero or sailing to or from far-distant shores through the Golden Gate.

The people, it was said, were noticeably jovial, as though attending a continuous festival. They loved music, drama, painting, sculpture, and literature of all sorts, and they warmly patronized the city's artists, many of whom were famous or soon to become so. There were several art schools, the best known of which was housed in the Mark Hopkins mansion—a Nob Hill structure that, seen from some angles, more closely resembled a small, congested town than a house. There was the prestigious Bohemian Club on Post Street, which included in its membership an impressive number of artists, writers, actors, and musicians. Moreover, San Franciscans respected scholarship in all fields. Two nearby universities—Stanford down the Peninsula, which had opened in 1891, and the older and academically renowned University of California in Berkeley across the Bay, with a faculty in 1900 of 108—had brought learned professors and graduate students to the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

community. In San Francisco itself there had existed for decades many a scholarly institute and library; well-stocked book-stores were plentiful, and literary societies, some of them erudite, abounded.

If San Francisco was lighthearted, it was serious as well, and these two qualities did not preclude one another; rather they blended to create an atmosphere at once sparkling and serene and as peculiar to the city as was its setting. Like the majority of people everywhere, the majority of San Franciscans were perhaps not inclined to think very deeply; but on the other hand, they were blessed with the liberty to do so; nothing prevented. They were free from the tensions of the East Coast, from the oppressive narrowness of the Midwest, and they were free, too, from both the rural naiveté and straining ambitions of southern California. Nothing in their environment pressed on their nerves, weighed on their hearts, or clouded their minds. They could expand their souls, and perhaps some did. The very fact that there were two well-supported Homes of Truth in this not-large city might indicate that many men and women were seeking beyond the orthodox, or even liberal, forms of Christianity for deeper answers to their deeper questions and needs. In any case, it was the founder of these organizations, Mrs. Annie Rix Militz, who had been instrumental in introducing Mrs. Hansbrough and many others to Swami Vivekananda's books, and it was the Pine Street Home of Truth, now under the supervision of a Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Aspinall, that welcomed Swamiji to the city, providing him, free of charge, with a room and board.

It has been generally assumed that Swamiji's incentive to visit San Francisco stemmed from an invitation from the Reverend Benjamin Fay Mills to speak before a Congress of Religions at the First Unitarian Church in Oakland and that his work in northern California began with his lectures before that Congress. Actually, neither of these things was the case. The thought of working in San Francisco had been in Swamiji's mind as early as December 27 and had perhaps become a

definite plan shortly after he had moved to Pasadena, at which time Mrs. Hansbrough had conceived the idea of becoming his advance agent. According to her "Reminiscences," it was after one of his lectures at the Shakespeare Club that she had said to him, "Swamiji, I think you would like me to go on to San Francisco." "His eyes lighted up," she related, "as they always did when he was particularly interested in something, and he answered, 'Yes, of course I would.'"

Promptly, Mrs. Hansbrough's sisters had discouraged her. "They did not feel," she said, "that I was a 'big' enough person to do what was necessary. Further, they did not feel that I was 'socially inclined' enough, and they never did think I was very bright."¹

Deflated by this sisterly counsel, Mrs. Hansbrough abandoned the idea of preparing Swamiji's way. It was he who without preamble brought the subject up again. "Well," he said to her one morning after breakfast while they were sitting alone together, "when are you going to San Francisco?"

Mrs. Hansbrough was taken aback. "Why," she replied, "I could go if you wanted me to."

Swamiji smiled. "When once you consider an action," he said, "do not let anything dissuade you. Consult your heart, not others, and then follow its dictates." "He seemed to have sensed," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "that I had been discouraged from the plan."

It had been shortly after this that a letter arrived from the Reverend B. Fay Mills, inviting Swamiji to speak before the Congress of Religions on Sunday, February 25. The invitation was, in a sense, a last-minute one. As late as January 13 a Dr. Sonado, an eminent Buddhist, then recently arrived in San Francisco from the Orient, had been scheduled to speak at the Congress instead of Swamiji,² who, possibly, Mr. Mills had not known was in California. But however that may be, when for one reason or another Dr. Sonado canceled his engagement, Mr. Mills wrote to Swami Vivekananda. He proposed either in his first letter or in a somewhat later one

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

that Swamiji give his first northern California lecture in Oakland at the Congress of Religions, where he would be assured of a large and overflowing audience. This done, he (Mr. Mills) would manage any lectures Swamiji might subsequently wish to give in San Francisco, advertising them in the local papers with the truthful banner: **MANY HUNDREDS TURNED AWAY!!!** ("He was a man of astute business," Mrs. Hansbrough remarked.)

From a box-office point of view, the plan was, to be sure, an excellent one. On hearing of it and of Mr. Mills's proposal that he be Swamiji's manager, Mrs. Hansbrough had again withdrawn. "Then I needn't go," she had said. But Swamiji was incapable of the box-office point of view, nor did he have any intention of allowing his work in San Francisco to be exploited. He accepted Mr. Mills's invitation to speak at the Unitarian church in Oakland, but that was all. "We shall support our own work," he had said to Mrs. Hansbrough. "I shall give my first lecture in San Francisco independently. I am willing to trust an American woman," he added; "I will trust an American man sometimes; but an American minister—never!"

Through many an unsavory experience during his first visit in the West, Swamiji well knew that the American minister, no matter how liberal, would never move far from the inbred beliefs of a congregation upon which his livelihood depended, would never dare to champion a Hindu monk to the end, would always, when pushed, back down and sometimes attack. That was in the nature of things, even as it was in Swamiji's nature to say what he had to say in total freedom. And in San Francisco he was to have much to say. So around the middle of February, Mrs. Hansbrough traveled north in the role of advance agent.

More than two weeks before her departure she and Miss MacLeod had discussed whether or not Swamiji's first lecture in northern California should be free. Miss MacLeod had thought that it should not be, and Mrs. Hansbrough, diffident

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in those days, had given in. "Swamiji usually let us decide these things," she related, "as he was unfamiliar with the country. I did not have the temerity and outspokenness I have now, or I would have ridiculed Miss MacLeod into agreeing that it should be a free first lecture. . . . If I were to have the work to do over again with my present perspective, I would do it much differently. I would get the California Academy of Sciences [in San Francisco] to sponsor the first lecture, and have it free. If we had done this, it would have given Swamiji at the start a group of intellectual people, and then he could have chosen from there on what he wanted to do."

This hindsighted plan might or might not have been effective. As it was, Mrs. Hansbrough, lacking experience, connections, and promotional flair, proceeded as best she could. For a week she busied herself getting in touch with her old San Francisco friends and acquaintances, particularly those interested in "New Thought"; she arranged for Swamiji to stay at the Home of Truth on Pine Street; she rented a hall for his first lecture; she had tickets printed, and, on February 18, she inserted a running advertisement in the *San Francisco Examiner*, which appeared in—or, more accurately, disappeared into—the Classified Ad Section. In five lines of close and small type under the general heading "Meeting Notices" it read:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA will lecture Friday evening, February 23d, at Golden Gate Hall, 625 Sutter Street; subject, "The Ideal of a Universal Religion"; admission 50c; tickets on sale at Sherman & Clay's, cor. Sutter and Kearney.

Few people could have noticed this announcement or, noticing, have been impressed by it. On the day of Swamiji's lecture, however, the same information appeared in the more widely read amusement column of the *San Francisco Chronicle* under the large, eye-catching, and misspelled heading:

SWAMI VIVIKANAWANDA. Added was the knowledge that Swami Vivikanawanda was the Hindoo monk and that his lecture would begin at eight o'clock.

Golden Gate Hall, the home of Golden Gate Commandery No. 16 of the Knights Templars, an order of Freemasonry, was a brick building that stood on the south side of Sutter Street between Taylor and Mason. As is the case with every San Francisco building in which Swamiji lectured, it was destroyed by the 1906 Fire and Earthquake; vanished, too, as far as can be ascertained, are photographs of anything but its hapless ruins. But to judge from pictures of a heap of bricks and a partly standing wall, the building had been a handsome one, with arched windows and doorway. Old accounts state that the Temple, built in 1891, had "a frontage of 72 feet, a depth of 138 feet, and an ample armory banquet hall and amphitheater which was used for lodge work and other functions."³ Although no records of the seating capacity of the amphitheater seem to exist, one may guess that it was medium-sized. One may also guess that the speaker's platform was not equipped with a separate entrance; for Swamiji, waiting on Friday evening, February 23, to approach the lectern, sat in the front row of the hall.

Shortly before eight o'clock Mrs. Hansbrough joined him, and together they silently conversed. By a sign he asked her how many people she thought had come. "One hundred and fifty," she whispered. But in the palm of his hand he wrote, "100." "He did not say anything," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "but he seemed disappointed." Yet, a hundred people was not a small gathering for a lecture that had not been announced in large, conspicuous type until the day of its occurrence and for which there was a charge of fifty cents per seat.

If anyone introduced Swamiji to his first San Franciscan audience there is no available record of who it was. It is possible that when the time to lecture came he simply ascended the platform, stood for a while looking into the faces of those who had come to hear him, and then entered into his subject,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

carrying his audience with him, transporting them almost at once, as a listener at one of his San Francisco lectures was to write, "into a sea of being, of feelings of a higher existence."⁴

Swamiji spoke for at least an hour and a half (one listener said "over two hours") on "The Ideal of a Universal Religion." During that time he must have given many of the ideas contained in his published lectures of a similar title; yet from the following write-ups which appeared the next morning in the local newspapers one would scarcely have guessed it. The *San Francisco Examiner's* report read as follows:

VIVEKANANDA, the Hindu Monk.

Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu Monk, was a dazzling figure last night as he stepped on the platform of Golden Gate Hall gowned in crushed strawberry silk, with a turban of the same hue. He held his audience in rapt attention for over two hours while he discoursed on "The Ideal of a Universal Religion."

Mr. Vivekananda said that the great contrasts in the nature of man were effected by peace and war. Peace aroused the angel in him; war the devil. Peace was the promoter of hospital and institutional work; war the demon that let loose the sword, smote the heart of the wife and made fatherless her infant children.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* did better:

HINDOO MONK LECTURES

Swami Vivekananda's Topic Is "The Idea of Universal Religion".

At Golden Gate Hall last evening Swami Vivekananda, a Hindoo monk, entertained an audience for an hour and a half with his lecture on "The Idea of Universal Religion." Swami Vivekananda is an interesting speaker. He first visited America in 1893, and was afterward the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

representative of the Hindoo religion at the World's Congress of Religions held in Chicago.

Tracing religion from the commencement of history he spoke of the existence of creeds. Sects were known from the earliest time, he said. As time rolled on there began various contests for a supremacy between the various sects. History, he declared, was a mere repetition of slaughter under the guise of religion. Superstition, he thought, was fast becoming a thing of the past through the expansion of the minds of men. They had more liberality of thought now. They were deeper students of philosophy and through the principles of true philosophy only could religion in its deepest form be found. Until men could accord to others the right of free belief on all subjects, and be willing to believe truth under whatever form it might appear, no universal religion would be manifest to the world, he declared. It would never be promulgated by any society, but would grow instinctively as the intellect of man developed.

Swamiji had begun his work in San Francisco as he had wanted: on his own, with a lecture of his own choosing and without obligation to anyone. Whether the admission to his first lecture had been fifty cents or free, whether his first audience had been large or small, was of little consequence compared to the establishment of his independence. He was now ready, and certainly willing, to speak before the Congress of Religions in Oakland.

2

In 1900, Oakland was a long, narrow, and perfectly flat city of some 70,000 souls. Because of its sheltered location, it escaped much of the fog and wind that swept from the ocean over San Francisco, and because of the wide mud flats along its bay-front, it escaped, as well, much of the commerce

and hurly-burly of the bigger city. Indeed, Oakland led a quiet, suburban life. It was full of trees and sunshine and boasted a landscaped lake at what was then its eastern end, where large Victorian houses, surrounded by wide lawns and parterres, gazed placidly at one another across the water, or, as the case might be, across tree-shaded avenues. Smaller houses, neat, uncrowded, and substantial, lined its less fashionable streets, along some of which up-to-date electric trolley cars clattered to and fro. Among other necessities of civic life, such as a City Hall, elementary schools, a Masonic Lodge, and innumerable churches (in relation to the population, there were three times as many churches as in San Francisco), Oakland contained a social club with artistic and intellectual leanings (named the Athenian), a theater, a handsome high-school building, and a Free Public Library that "kept well up in works of fiction, science and art." If the city itself was uniformly level, to the north and east there were rolling hills that one could look at or walk among; and from those hills themselves one could enjoy a fine panoramic view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate—a view at its best at sunset when the distant mountains of Marin County darkened and the sky and water shone fiery red or gold.

The people of Oakland were, on the whole, not too different from those in San Francisco; many of them were, in fact, San Franciscans who preferred to make their residence in the warmer, quieter, and more easy-going East Bay. But if they slept in Oakland and raised their children there, they visited the metropolis regularly for business, for shopping, for pleasure, for culture, for almost everything but church-going, commuting back and forth on commodious ferryboats, where, by gentlemen's agreement, their individual seats, once chosen, were thereafter held inviolate. As a contemporary guidebook of the Bay Area admitted, Oakland and the smaller towns in its vicinity, such as Berkeley and Alameda, were "somewhat disrespectfully, though not inappropriately, called the 'bedroom of San Francisco.'"

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Oakland was also called a number of other names, less disrespectful but equally appropriate: the "City of Churches," the "City of Roses," the "City of Homes," and, because of its proximity to the University of California at Berkeley, the "Athens of the West." In later years the city became commercially ambitious and lost its residential character and charm, but in Swamiji's time Oakland was content with churches, roses, homes, and a nearby temple of learning, which did indeed, as the guidebook said, give it "quite the air of a University town."

Compared to the great and renowned World's Parliament of Religions, Oakland's Congress was a lackluster affair, and, except for Swamiji's participation, strictly local. Conceived by the Reverend B. Fay Mills and held under the auspices of the Young People's Religious Union of the First Unitarian Church, it consisted of eight consecutive Sunday-evening lectures, each delivered by a representative of a different religious outlook. Apart from the word denoting the speaker's faith, the titles of all eight lectures were ready-made and identical, namely, "The Claims of. . . on the Modern World." On the evenings of January 21 and 28 and of February 4 and 11, the claims of Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestant Orthodoxy, and Liberal Religion had been respectively set forth. The last-mentioned claim, made by the Rev. Mr. Mills, had completed the first series. Undramatic as this Congress seems to have been, the interest it aroused in Oakland was intense. On the first two Sundays the church auditorium and the large hall adjoining it had been crowded to overflowing, and, to be sure, hundreds had been turned away. The two Protestant speakers had also drawn a crowd, particularly Mr. Mills, who was an orator of no small talent.

At the time of our story the Reverend Mr. Mills was occupying the pulpit of the First Unitarian Church only temporarily and was uncertain as to whether or not he would accept the position of permanent pastor. The congregation was imploring him to do so. "We all think a great deal of both he and Mrs.

Mills," a leading member of the church was quoted in the *San Francisco Examiner* as having said, "and the church needs them badly."¹ Indeed the church thought so much of Mr. Mills that a special meeting of the trustees was held to determine what arrangements in the way of salary and privileges could induce him to stay.

Mr. Mills, at the time in his early forties, was an intensely determined, extroverted man with an erect, slightly militant carriage, leonine blond hair, and piercing blue eyes. He had started out his ministerial career some twenty years earlier as a small-time Congregationalist pastor, going from village church to village church. In 1886, having discovered within himself an extraordinary talent for rousing people to religious fervor, he resigned a small pastorate in Rutland, Vermont, to devote himself to itinerant, interdenominational evangelism. He was phenomenally successful. For some ten years he energetically evangelized in town after town, including San Francisco and Oakland, delivering in the latter city fifty sermons in 1892. By 1893 he had become so well known that he was invited to speak before the august Parliament of Religions. By this time his religious views had somewhat changed. Because of a "social vision," as he was later to explain, he had conceived of Christ as the Savior of the social organization rather than of individuals, and accordingly he had begun to lose faith in the evangelical approach. During the Parliament his views were to undergo an even more radical change. The B. Fay Mills who orated at that assembly in typical orthodox fashion ("Christ stands or falls in connection with His claim to be the Savior of the entire world"),² was shortly thereafter to undertake, as he said, "a study of the great books of all ages and nations, through which [study] the Bible ceased to be to me the exclusively inspired word of God."³ It would appear that Mr. Mills had not only orated at the Parliament but had listened—and he had listened in particular to a flaming young Hindu monk named Swami Vivekananda. "This man," he was later to say to Mrs. Hansbrough, "altered my life!"⁴ He

was also to say that after the Parliament of Religions he and his wife had kept track of Swamiji's work and had read his books as they were published. Although many years later Mr. Mills was to return to the itinerant evangelism of his youth, he made a definite break with that career in 1897 and established a People's Church in Boston. Indeed so liberal had Mr. Mills become that one finds him speaking in June of 1899 before the Free Religious Association, which represented liberal Christianity at its most erudite and best and before which Swamiji had spoken once or twice during his first visit in America. "The Bible of today," Mr. Mills had said during this talk, "is a hindrance to the full development of life. . . ." ⁵ Shortly thereafter he came with his wife and three children to the Pacific Coast for a year's vacation, and it was at this point that the First Unitarian Church of Oakland persuaded him to fill its then empty pulpit for a period of four months. With the close of February, 1900, the term would have run its course, but, as we have seen, the church could not bear to part with this handsome and dynamic preacher who packed the pews, wrung tears from the congregation, opened both its heart and its purse, and whose name was often in the newspapers as the target of an outraged orthodox ministry.

The second series of the Congress of Religions, which dealt, as Mr. Mills put it, "with the ancient and modern forms of religion and their claims on the world," consisted, in order of their presentation, of the claims of Spiritualism, of Vedantism (or Hindooism), of Theosophy, and of Christian Science. All this unorthodoxy created a rumbling among the Oakland clergy. "Run after a pretentious healer. . . and call it 'progress,'" fumed one Reverend R. F. Coyle, a Presbyterian minister of some prominence. "Put a Hindoo in the pulpit in the name of progress. Call a 'Congress of Religions' and there will be a crowd at the church door an hour before the mockery begins. And through it all the novelty hunters flash and foam and the throne of God grows out of date." ⁶ The Reverend B. Fay Mills was unperturbed. "I have always admired Dr. Coyle,"

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

said he, "because I believe he is an honest man and a good man. . . . When he says these Sunday night lectures are a farce, I refer him to our doors at 7:30 o'clock in the evening, when people are being turned away by the hundreds."

That people were being turned away by the hundreds from the second series of the Congress of Religions was true at least of Swamiji's lecture on "The Claims of Vedantism," which took place on the evening of February 25. As has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, Swami Vivekananda's name was well known on the Pacific Coast. All that was required to draw crowds to his lecture were informative and conspicuous announcements, and in this regard the leading Oakland papers—the *Enquirer* and the *Tribune*—had not been remiss. The following two articles that heralded Swamiji's lecture in the *Enquirer* were unearthed many years ago by a member of the Vedanta Society of Northern California and were subsequently reprinted in *Prabuddha Bharata* of March 1936. They have not, however, been reproduced elsewhere, and therefore should, I believe, be included here. The first appeared on February 23, the second the following day:

A DISTINGUISHED HINDOO.

Swami Vivekananda, Teacher of the Vedanta
Philosophy, to Speak Here Sunday Night.

Swami Vivekananda, a distinguished Hindoo lecturer and teacher of the Vedanta philosophy, arrived in San Francisco last evening from Los Angeles. He expects to remain here several weeks teaching and lecturing, and will occupy the pulpit of the First Unitarian church next Sunday evening in the parliament of religions which is being held there. He represents the order of Sanyasino, a traveling priesthood, which inculcates its philosophy, after the Hindoo fashion, to learners wherever found, whether at the plow, the bench or in pilgrimage. The Swami is a man of profound learning in the line of psychology and the philosophy of eastern religions.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

A MAN OF MARK

Swami Vivekananda, A Remarkable Oriental

An Eloquent Expounder of the Faith of Brahminism

When the Congress of Religions was held in Chicago in connection with the World's Fair in 1893 several remarkable men from the Orient appeared, including H. Dharmapala of Ceylon, Rev. Zitsuzo Ashitzu, Narasima Charia, and Professor G. N. Chakravarti. But the most remarkable exemplar of orientalism was the Swami Vivekananda, a Hindoo who stands for the Brahmin religion, or Vedantism as he prefers to call it.

Those who heard Vivekananda at Chicago have been enthusiastic in praise of his power as an orator. He is a large, fine looking man who has an excellent command of English and is a master of elocutionary effects. After the Chicago parliament Vivekananda lectured to thronged houses in the large cities of this country and then returned to India, where he was received with extraordinary honours. It seems the simple-minded people of India had heard of Vivekananda's success in America and had exaggerated it so much that they believed he had converted the whole American Continent and in particular had rescued the United States from the errors of Christianity, as they considered them.

So when he reappeared among his friends they hailed him as the deliverer of the Western world, and being wrought up with excess of enthusiasm they took Vivekananda in their arms and it is said that he was passed from village to village and city to city until he had been transported seventeen miles without his feet having once touched the ground.

Vivekananda is now in the United States a second time for a tour of some of the large cities. Swami means monk of the order of Sannyasins. Viveka means "discrimination" and ananda means "bliss". The Swami comes to Oakland tomorrow to deliver his address at the local congress of

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

religions in the evening at the Unitarian Church but Rev. B. F. Mills hopes to arrange with him to deliver a course of lectures here.

The Swami claims to belong to "the most ancient order of monks in the world" and his faith he characterizes as "the mother of religion". Vedantism is the religion of the Vedas, or the ancient Hindoo books. In one of his Chicago addresses Vivekananda said: [There follow four paragraphs of quotations from Swamiji's paper on Hinduism delivered before the Parliament of Religions.]

On February 24, the *Oakland Tribune* added its own heralding news of Swamiji, and on Sunday evening, February 25, a little late to be of service to the San Francisco public, the *San Francisco Bulletin* printed a short but well-headed notice in its Oakland Church News. These two announcements read respectively:

INDIAN IN OAKLAND PULPIT

The Serami Vive Kananda, who is to lecture on the ancient Brahman religion of India at the Unitarian church on Sunday evening, is one of the noted philosophers and orators of the world. He first came to America to represent Hindoostan in the World's Parliament of Religions. It is not too much to say that he there produced the most powerful impression of any of the delegates. After the Parliament, he lectured to thronged houses in large cities, and then returned to India, where he was received with honors said to be greater than any paid to a religious teacher since the time of Buddha. He has now returned to America for a tour of some of our cities.

Serami means monk of the order of Sanyasin. Viveka means discrimination and ananda means bliss.

The Serami comes to Oakland to deliver this address at the Congress of Religions, but Mr. Mills is in hopes

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

that arrangements may be made for him to deliver a course of lectures in this city.

Swami Kananda to Speak to the Unitarians. Will Discuss the Doctrines of the Modern Brahmin Religion.

Oakland, Feb. 24. —At the First Unitarian Church tomorrow evening Swami Vive Kananda, the noted Hindoo monk, will speak on "The Claims of Hindooism on the Modern World." He is said to be a most eloquent speaker and is the most prominent divine in the Orient. The musical programme will consist of a soprano solo by Miss Eva Shorey, a violin solo by Mrs. Frank A. Wasley (the latter a Hindoo song) and the usual organ numbers by Mr. Frank Katzenbach.

At the turn of the century, the First Unitarian Church, established in 1877, was *the* church of Oakland's many churches—the one, that is, to which the more intellectually inclined people of the upper and middle classes belonged and to which they went of a Sunday morning. The building itself, then ten years old, stood (and still stands) near the center of town on the corner of Fourteenth and Castro Streets. It was a graceful, gable-roofed, gray stone and red brick structure built around three sides of a courtyard, the fourth side of which opened on Fourteenth Street. The right wing, now ivy-grown, housed the bell tower and the main auditorium, the left wing the church offices. Connecting the two wings was Wendte Hall, which was used primarily for Sunday School, social functions, dramas, and such lectures as were not, strictly speaking, sermons. It was used also on occasion to accommodate an overflow crowd. Wendte Hall and the church auditorium adjoined one another at right angles; thus when the wide folding doors between them were opened, the pulpit, which in those days stood squarely in the center of the chancel, served both halls.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

On the evening of Sunday, February 25, the folding doors were opened wide. Both the main auditorium and Wendte Hall, whose combined capacity was 2,000, were jammed to overflowing, and a crowd of five hundred unfortunate men and women had been turned away for lack of room. The audience was restless in anticipation.

For one reason or another (perhaps he missed the proper ferry from San Francisco, which, after seven o'clock in the evening, ran on a half-hour schedule) Swamiji did not arrive at the church when the newspapers had said he would. The musical program had run its course, and Mr. Mills had made his introductory remarks. Still no Swami Vivekananda.

It should be mentioned here that in the early editions of the *Life* it is said: "In a lecture before the gathering, the Rev. Dr. Mills speaking on 'The Hindu Way of Salvation,' introduced the Swami in terms of highest praise, describing him as, 'a man of gigantic intellect, indeed, one to whom our greatest university professors were as mere children.'"⁸ Actually, Mr. Mills gave this lecture in San Francisco more than two years later (on April 20, 1902) before the Unity Club, a society he had then just organized. His introduction of Swamiji at the Unitarian Church in 1900 is not, to my knowledge, on record. It was perhaps short; for in the absence of its subject, Mr. Mills resorted to telling stories.

Then at last there was a sudden stir, a sense of excitement. Swamiji in his robe and turban entered from the street and with superb, unself-conscious majesty and grace strode down the right aisle and ascended the steps to the pulpit. But let us see him through the eyes of one who was present; for we are lucky enough to have in the archives of the Vedanta Society of Northern California a brief description of the occasion written many years afterward by Miss Sarah Fox as an introduction to her memoirs.

Miss Fox, who from 1900 forward was to enter heart and soul into the study and practice of Vedanta, visited India in 1922, where, together with her sister Rebecca, she remained

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

for four years, keeping in close contact with the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Returning to Oakland in 1926, she lived, while teaching school and attending to household duties, a deeply meditative, God-centered life. The Hindu swamis of the Vedanta Society who sometimes visited her small, humble home in Oakland found its atmosphere like that of an Indian monastery, and they found Miss Fox herself far along on the spiritual path. Her memories of Swamiji's appearance at the Unitarian church are perhaps of special value, for not only was his impact upon her life manifestly profound, but through her eyes one somehow sees him as he was—not as a man possessed of tremendous power, but as a living power embodied in human form.

According to her memoirs, Miss Fox, then a resident of Berkeley, first heard of Swamiji from Mr. Paul Militz, who had married Annie Rix, the founder of the West Coast Homes of Truth, around 1893 and who was now the leader of a small religious group in Oakland to which Miss Fox and her sister belonged. Mr. Militz, who had seen Swamiji in New York and had no doubt attended some of his classes and lectures, spoke highly of him, and the Fox sisters were deeply impressed. "When the news was published shortly afterwards that the great Swami was going to lecture in Oakland," Miss Fox recalled, "we were bound and determined to hear him." Her memoirs continue:

The lecture was scheduled for eight o'clock on a Sunday night in the spring of 1900, at the First Unitarian Church in Oakland. Everyone was on time except the Swami, and the minister was entertaining the congregation with stories to keep them from going away. In the middle of these tales we all became aware that the Swami had arrived. He entered the Church auditorium from the street entrance and without any ado walked down the aisle nearest the wall to the front of the church in long, slow, measured steps. This wonderful man, clad in an ochre robe and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

wearing a turban, looked as if he feared nothing and cared for nothing. He seemed like an immense wave going along; his back was straight as a rod, yet his entire bearing was a perfect blending of dignity and grace. He reached the pulpit and stood there for a long time just looking out over the congregation. Then after what seemed like an hour, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen. . . " We were seated too far away to see his face closely, but how we enjoyed his discourse! He did not seem old, as indeed he was not, but tremendously wise and experienced.⁹

"After the lecture was over," Miss Fox went on, "the Swami invited questions, and the one which I remember was particularly foolish. An unlucky woman asked, 'Is it true, Swami? I have heard that you throw new-born babies into the Ganges.' The Swami replied, 'Madam, we have heard that at Thanksgiving you serve new-born babies!' "

(Swamiji seems never to have run out of answers to this question, which pursued him from one end of the United States to the other. In Los Angeles he had replied, "Yes, madam; but I was one who escaped." Or, when the question applied to girl babies only: "Yes, madam, and now-a-days all the babies are born of men."¹⁰ And in Detroit in 1894 when he was asked why only female children were given to the crocodiles, he had answered, "Probably because they are softer and more tender and can be more easily masticated."¹¹ Or again in Detroit, "I was such a fat little baby the crocodiles refused to swallow me. Whenever I feel badly about being such a fat monk, I think of how I was saved from the crocodiles and am comforted."¹² Thus he ridiculed stupidity until it hid its head in shame—literally. In Los Angeles, Mrs. Hansbrough related, he once made the question sound so inane that the friend who had asked it hid behind her chair. "I don't blame you," Swamiji had said, "I would hide, too, if I had asked such a question!")¹³

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

All that is known of Swamiji's Oakland lecture itself comes to us from three newspaper accounts, one of which appeared in the *Oakland Times* of February 26. It read in part:

AN APOSTLE OF VEDANTISM HINDOO PRIEST ELOQUENTLY TELLS OF MAN AND SPIRIT

Immense Throng Gathered in Unitarian church
to Listen to his Discourse

Before a large audience, such as the Unitarian church has never seen before, the doctrine of Vedantism was expounded last evening by the famous exponent of that religion, Swami Vivekananda. Many people went to the church before 6 o'clock and waited over an hour for the doors to open. It was estimated that at least 500 were turned away for want of standing room.

The Swami created a marked impression. Frequently he received applause during the lecture, and upon concluding held a levee of enthusiastic admirers. He said in part, under the subject of "The Claims of Vedantism on the Modern World:"...

The remainder of this article, which filled a column and a half, was the same as that in the *Oakland Enquirer*. The *Enquirer's* article was reprinted in *Prabuddha Bharata* of March 1936 and subsequently in volume eight of the *Complete Works*. In type big and black its headings read:

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTISM
As Expounded by Swami Vivekananda Last Evening.
A Vast Throng Attended His Address at the Unitarian Church.
Will Speak Again Wednesday Evening at Wendte Hall on
Vedantism and Christianity.

The article that followed was, like most newspaper reports

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

of Swamiji's lectures, an unsatisfactory and disjointed sort of thing. Yet, one can gather from it the gist of what he said. Its theme was that wonderful one which he had literally poured into the minds of whomever he had spoken to in the West, from the Parliament of Religions to these last days of his work, when he so strongly emphasized it: "The one great secret of religion is to know for yourself that you are Spirit. Do not cry out, 'I am a worm, I am nobody!' As the poet says, 'I am Existence, Knowledge and Truth.' No man can do any good in the world by crying out, 'I am one of its evils.' The more perfect you are, the less imperfection you see."¹⁴

There is no need to quote long passages from the *Enquirer* article, for the reader can find the full text in the *Complete Works*. The report published in the *Oakland Tribune* of February 26, however, has not been reprinted and can be quoted here in full, for though it is in part repetitious of the *Enquirer*, it adds somewhat to our knowledge. (The *Tribune* article was repeated in its entirety in the *San Francisco Call* of the same date, and the following headings, which varied from those of the *Tribune*, are taken from the *Call*.)

VEDANTISM, AND WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

Lecture of Swami Vivekananda on the
Religion of the Hindoos.

It is the Only Creed, He Says, that Can Be Taught
Without Lies and Without Compromise.

The claims of the Brahmin religion, or Vedantism, on the modern world were presented to-night at the Congress of Religions in the First Unitarian Church by Swami Vivekananda, a remarkably eloquent expounder of that faith. His lecture proved one of the most instructive of the series given before the Congress, and decidedly the most novel.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Vivekananda is a Hindoo, and after attending the Congress of Religions in Chicago during the World's Fair, he lectured to thronged houses in many of our largest cities. When he returned to his people in India they hailed him as a deliverer of the Western world. They were wrought up with excessive enthusiasm, and fairly carried him in their arms from city to city. This is his second tour in this country.

To his auditors to-night he explained Vedantism as the religion of the Vedas, or ancient Hindoo books, which, he asserted, is "the mother of religion."

"It may seem ridiculous how a book can be without beginning or end," he said, "but by the Vedas no books are meant. They signify the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. The Hindoo believes he is a spirit. Him the sword cannot pierce, him the fire cannot burn, him the water cannot melt, him the air cannot dry. He believes every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose center is located in a body. Death means the change of this center from body to body. We are the children of God. Matter is our servant.

"Vedantism is a sort of rebellion against the mockery of the past. Some men are so practical that if they know that by chopping off their heads they could get salvation, there are many who would do so. That is all outward; you must turn your eyes inward to learn what is in your soul. Soul is spirit omnipresent. Where does the soul go after death? Where could the earth fall to? Where can the soul go? Where is it not already? The great cornerstone of Vedantism is the recognition of Self. Man, have faith in yourself. The soul is the same in every one. It is all purity and perfection and the more pure and perfect we [you] are the more purity and perfection you will see.

"A man or preaching jack who cries, 'Oh Lord, I'm only a crawling worm!' should be still and crawl into his

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

hole. His cries only add more misery to the world. I was amused to read in one of your papers, 'How would Christ edit a paper?' How foolish. How would Christ cook a meal? Yet you are the advanced people of the West. If Christ came here, you would shut up shop and go into the street with him to help the poor and downtrodden. Vedantism is the only religion that can be taught without lies, without stretching the texts, without compromise."

It should perhaps be mentioned that the fourth paragraph of the above article appears to be a condensation of the quotations in the *Enquirer* article of February 24, which quotations were, in turn, taken from Swamiji's address at the Parliament of Religions. Whether the *Tribune* took a part of its copy from the *Enquirer*'s article, or whether Swamiji repeated almost word for word what he had said six and a half years earlier, it is hard to say. It is clear, however, that the *Tribune*'s somewhat sly reference to Swamiji's reception in India as "a deliverer of the Western world" was taken from the *Enquirer*'s earlier remark regarding "the simple-minded people of India [who] believed he had converted the whole American Continent." Behind this allusion lay a tale, the telling of which will not be out of place here.

3

As is well known, the whole of India had risen to welcome and honor its great sannyasin who, having vindicated Hinduism in the eyes of the West, had returned to his Motherland at the beginning of 1897. One of the first tributes to Swamiji appeared in the form of an editorial published in the Calcutta *Indian Mirror* on January 21, six days after his arrival at Colombo, Ceylon. The editorial was, to be sure, enthusiastic. "Hundreds of men and women have enlisted themselves under the standard which [Swami Vivekananda] unfolded in America," it read, "and some of them have even taken to the bowl and the

yellow-robcs. . . . The tide of conversion seemed to have rolled back from the East to the West—the tables were completely turned—and the Hindu mission in the West was crowned with a greater and more glorious success than what has ever been vouchsafed to Christian missions in the East.” These were fighting words; they sent a spasm of alarm and indignation through the Christian community. A Mr. Wilbur W. White, secretary of the Calcutta Young Men’s Christian Association, grabbed up a pen and wrote to “a number of prominent men and women in my beloved land [America].”

In each letter (they were identical) he enclosed a copy of the editorial and requested his addressee to comment in reply upon “the likelihood of America abandoning Christianity and adopting either Hinduism or Mohammedanism in its stead.” “I desire to secure for wide circulation in India,” he concluded, “a symposium on *Hinduism and Mohammedanism in America*. Or if you please to be more particular, *Swami Vivekananda in America*.”¹

The replies duly arrived, and forty-five of them were subsequently included in a highly defamatory and vindictive little book published in 1897 in Madras by the Christian Literary Society for India and entitled at some length *Swami Vivekananda and His Guru with Letters From Prominent Americans on The Alleged Progress of Vedantism in The United States*. All the letters printed in this book staunchly denied that the American people had abandoned Christianity for Hinduism or Mohammedanism and affirmed with some heat that Swami Vivekananda had not made the slightest impression in the United States. Most of the letters were from prominent divines; a few were from Swamiji’s acquaintances, such as Lyman Abbott and Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University; and one, it so happened, was from the Reverend B. Fay Mills.

Mr. Mills’s letter serves as a brief sample of the published replies: “. . . [Swami Vivekananda] did not produce a ripple in the stream of Christian thought and progress,” he wrote. “Except for a mild curiosity to see how far Hindu dogmas

might be strained to suggest Christian Ethics, I do not know that he produced any effect on American Christian thought or practice. The receiving him as a converter of American Christianity to Hinduism is too ridiculous to demand any contradiction. Most of us did not even know he had been here since the Parliament."²

Mr. Mills appears to have been a man of varying words and memories. Was he not to say three years later that he and his wife had kept track of Swamiji after the Parliament of Religions and read all his works? And was he not also to say that Swami Vivekananda had altered his life? But then, few American ministers made such declarations publicly—particularly in 1897.

In addition to the little missionary book, and in part because of it, a number of articles derogatory to Swamiji—some of them exceedingly spiteful—appeared that year and the next in American and Indian newspapers and magazines. Swamiji had paid no attention. "What do I care about what they talk—the babies, they do not know any better," he had written in July of 1897 to Mary Hale, who had expressed concern. "What? I, who have realized the spirit and the vanity of all earthly nonsense, to be swerved from my path by babies' prattle? Do I look like that?"³

But though Swamiji had scorned to give a rejoinder to this prattle, Dr. Lewis G. Janes, his good friend who never wavered ("the most wholly stainless man I ever knew," Thomas Wentworth Higginson was to write of him),⁴ had come to his defense. In two letters to the editor of the *Outlook*, a well-known weekly of the era, he replied to a malign editorial entitled "American Buddhists," writing in part:

The first thing that strikes the impartial reader is the incongruity of the title with the subject-matter of the article, inasmuch as the latter relates wholly to certain statements alleged to have been made by the Swami Vivekananda in regard to the spread of Vedantism in Europe and America. . . . The Swami Vivekananda is not

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

and never was a Buddhist, nor is he in any way connected with the theosophical movement referred to in your article....

So far as I have had an opportunity of observing, and my opportunities have been considerable, in the Brooklyn Ethical Association, the Cambridge Conference and the Monsalvat School of Comparative Religion, at Greenacre, Eliot, Maine, where [Swami Vivekananda and Swami Saradananda] have lectured, the teachers of the Vedanta have made no efforts at proselyting or making "converts" in this country. The Vedanta has been presented as a system of philosophical thought which recognizes the truth of all religions, and which might constitute a philosophical basis of Christianity as well as of Hinduism.

This teaching has undoubtedly been welcomed and appreciated by hundreds, if not thousands, of intelligent people in this country, and permanent classes and associations have been formed in several cities for continued study.

...The eminent gentlemen whom you quote...testify that they know of no Americans who have forsaken Christianity for Hinduism. I testify that I know of no one who has attempted to bring about such a result. If the testimony of Drs. Eliot, Angell, Boardman, and others, should be interpreted as a denial that any serious interest in the Vedanta has been created in America, the situation would appear to be very much like that of the man who was accused of stealing a dog, and confronted by three witnesses who saw him do it. He met the assault upon his character by bringing thirty entirely credible witnesses who *didn't* see him do it. I report certain things that my work and relations with the teaching of Vedanta have enabled me to know. These gentlemen, whose credibility I would not for an instant question, testify that they do not know certain other things.⁵

In time the uproar subsided. Indeed the ineffectiveness of the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

attempts to discredit Swamiji in the United States can best be judged by the subsequent action of Mr. Mills. When at the beginning of 1900 he had invited the great and famous Hindu monk to speak at the Unitarian church in Oakland he had done so with the certain knowledge that even in this staid and orthodox "City of Churches," throngs would flock to hear him—not once but as often as he would speak. Having no doubt of this, he now invited Swamiji to deliver a second free lecture at the church and, further, a series of three pay lectures in Wendte Hall.

There was, to be sure, one complaint, which the *Enquirer* of March 2 printed in conjunction with two firm replies:

THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA EXCITES SOME CONTROVERSY

A Christian Who Calls Him an Exponent of Paganism—
What President Elliot of the young people's Union says.

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings of next week and Monday night of the following week Swami Vivekananda, the famous Hindoo monk sojourning in California is to deliver a course of three lectures on the principles of Vedantism. On the subject of these lectures and those which have been delivered, the following communication has been received:

Editor *Enquirer*: Perhaps the following quotation that appeared a while ago in the "Indian Nation," an orthodox East Indian journal, may prove interesting to some just at this time, especially to those misguided individuals whom the press informs us applauded the lecture delivered last Sunday night at the Unitarian auditorium and constitute the "levee of enthusiastic admirers" who gushed over the "distinguished savant" at its close.

This journal declares that "the pure and undefiled Hindooism which Swami Vivekananda preached, has

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

no existence to-day, in fact, has had no existence for centuries, but on the contrary, abomination worship is the main ingredient of modern Hindooism."

Another paper, *The Hindu*, also published at Madras, says of the endowed temples and shrines of India that "they are corrupt to the core. They are a festering mass of crime and vice and gigantic swindling." The same paper, speaking of the Brahman priesthood describes these priests as "ignorant, profoundly selfish, immoral." It mentions the popular dancing girls of India only to say that such a girl "insults the Deity by her very existence," and it declares of the "pining child widow" that "every hair of her head will rise up in judgment before the bar of God in witness against the system which tolerates it."

It is indeed to be regretted that a civilized Christian community should be subjected to the annoyance of having an exponent of this disgusting paganism forced upon it under the pseudonym of 'religion'.

[This letter, which had also been sent to the editor of the *Oakland Times*, was signed simply with the initials C.J.P. The *Enquirer* submitted it to the officials of the Unitarian church for their comment, which was duly received. The article continued with the church's staunch rejoinder:]

NEEDS NO APOLOGY

In speaking of the above communication Mr. A. H. Elliot, president of the First Unitarian church, under whose auspices the address referred to was given, says that the writer of the communication either did not attend the lecture or is a person who is not thoughtful and allows his prejudice to govern his religious opinions. "In the first place," says Mr. Elliot, "there was no levee of enthusiastic admirers; there was no gushing over the distinguished savant. At the close of his address there

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

were a number of people who went forward to meet the speaker, as is usual at the close of all these lectures. Perhaps there were more on this occasion, which fact is accounted for by the speaker being a foreigner. We know nothing of either of the papers referred to by 'C.J.P.' Neither do we care what they are, for we accept the speaker for what he said. All that the Swami said during the lecture is in thorough keeping with the teachings of modern science and the expression of this great thinker. If one would take up a course in the University with Kant he would find there the same things that the Swami told us, only that in the Swami's discourse they were put before us in a more simple manner by a man of great culture. It is very evident that the person who wrote this communication did not attend the lecture, but rushed into print after having read the account in the newspapers." The fact that the Swami was given a most respectful hearing at the Parliament of Religions at the world's Columbian Exposition, where the most distinguished representatives of all forms of faith were assembled ought to indicate to an intelligent person that no apology is necessary for permitting him to speak in the series of discourses which are being presented on Sunday evenings in the First Unitarian Church.

A BROAD PLATFORM

Judge John W. Stetson, who is one of the prominent members of the Unitarian Church and president of the Starr King Fraternity, spoke of "C.J.P.'s" protest against the Hindoo, Swami Vivekananda, having a hearing, as follows: "Such an argument is foolish. I challenge any one to go and listen to the Swami and then show where there is anything in his teachings that is not for the good of humanity. It may be true that there are things in the religion as taught in India that are not desirable, but any one who heard the Swami will admit that his teachings regarding morality are good. It is well understood that the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Unitarians do not endorse all that is said from our platforms, but they have advanced ideas and are liberal enough to allow any one who has a good teaching and is honest in his belief to tell it from their platform."

As far as the Oakland papers were concerned, this ended the controversy. Even in the civilized Christian community of Oakland the days when diatribes against Swamiji and India made good reading had long since passed. Indeed, attacks against Swamiji were now so palpably absurd that the orthodox ministers of the city engaged in attacking the Reverend B. Fay Mills rather than his famous guest speaker. "COYLE ROASTS B. FAY MILLS," the headlines blared. "PRESBYTERIAN ROUNDLY SCORES METHODS OF UNITARIAN." "WOULDN'T TOLERATE REV. B. FAY MILLS: OBJECTED TO HIS SPEAKING IN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH." "LIBERALISM OF B. FAY MILLS EXCORIATED." And so on—much to the entertainment of the Oakland laity. Mr. Mills, never averse to a headline, was undisturbed; on the contrary, he preached his Liberalism with a greater zeal and flourish than ever and accepted, on his own terms, the invitation to the Unitarian pulpit.

After airing both sides of the short-lived controversy over Swamiji, the *Enquirer* of March 2 went on in the same article to a report of his second lecture at the Unitarian church, which had taken place on the evening of Wednesday, February 28, and which, predictably, had drawn as large and appreciative a crowd as had the first:

THE SWAMI'S LECTURE

"Some Points of Resemblance Between Vedantism and Christianity"

Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu monk sojourning in California, delivered a lecture at the First Unitarian Church Wednesday on "Some Points of Resemblance Between Vedantism and Christianity."

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

The speaker first discoursed upon comparative religions and showed that the semitic branch of the Caucasian family had contributed two great religions, Judaism and Mohammedanism, and that the Aryan branch had contributed several others. [He said] that all of these had resemblances in common and that all such resemblances were not due to the fact that they were derived from some religion which had preceded or because there had been communication between those holding the different faiths, but because the principles of true religion were the same, man being an essentially religious animal.

He then went into particulars to show that the first resemblance between Christianity and Vedantism was that each had an authoritative book—the Bible in the case of the Christian and the Vedas in the case of the Hindu.

After discussing this first resemblance at considerable length he took up the second, which he said was the belief in a trinity.

The next and a striking resemblance was that in each instance the second person of trinity descends to earth to redeem mankind. He then discussed the question of reincarnation, stating that whereas the Christian believed in but one incarnation, the Hindu believed in many.

In volume six of the *Complete Works*, under the heading “The Vedanta Philosophy and Christianity,” one can find notes of this lecture. Who took them down is undisclosed, but whoever he might have been, he was in some respects a better listener than the *Enquirer* reporter. Although the reader can verify this for himself, let me quote just a little from the *Complete Works*:

“This act of imitation has been laid at the door of different religions,” Swamiji said; “but that it is a superficial charge is evident from the following facts:

“Religion is fundamental in the very soul of humanity; and as all life is the evolution of that which is within, it, of necessity, expresses itself through various peoples and nations.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

"The language of the soul is one, the languages of nations are many; their customs and methods of life are widely different. Religion is of the soul and finds expression through various nations, languages, and customs. Hence it follows that the difference between the religions of the world is one of expression and not of substance; and their points of similarity and unity are of the soul.... All who have actually attained any real religious nature never wrangle over the form in which the different religions are expressed. They know that the life of all religions is the same, and, consequently, they have no quarrel with anybody because he does not speak the same tongue....

"...I have travelled all over the world; I have been among the very worst kind of people—among cannibals—and I have never seen the man who is not at least my equal. I have done as they do—when I was a fool. Then I did not know any better; now I do. Now they do not know any better; after a while they will. Everyone acts according to his own nature. We are all in process of growth. From this standpoint one man is not better than another."⁶

The ideas contained in this lecture were clearly similar to those in "The Ideal of a Universal Religion." As we have said before, Swamiji rarely neglected to impress these ideas, which held the very essence of his Master's teachings, upon the people of every city he visited. "We do not only tolerate but accept every religion," he had written to a friend in January of 1894, "and with the Lord's help I am trying to preach it to the whole world."⁷ Usually he gave these teachings at the outset of a lecture course. They were, in a sense, like the opening, annunciatory chords of some great orchestral work; they set the mood and the key, silenced the prejudices of the mind, brought its energies together and freed it, opened it, to receive the soaring themes that were to come. Or if, by chance, a receptive listener heard these ideas alone, he still would have heard enough to change his view of the religions of his fellow-men and of his own religion as well.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Swamiji was pleased with his reception in Oakland. "The people here have been prepared by my writings beforehand and they come in big crowds," he wrote to Mrs. Bull on March 4. "... Rev. Benjamin Fay Mills invited me to Oakland and gave me big crowds to preach to.... My health is about the same; don't find much difference; it is improving, perhaps, but very imperceptibly. I can use my voice, however, to make 3,000 people hear me as I did twice in Oakland and get good sleep too after two hours of speaking."⁸

4

Swamiji's ringing, musical voice that filled both the auditorium of the Unitarian church and Wendte Hall deeply stirred those who heard it. While the available notes and reports of his two lectures give us some idea of what he had said, they leave much to the imagination. It is only through the reminiscences of those who actually heard his words rolling out with the living, concentrated force of his personality behind them that we can derive some idea of how they impressed his audience. One such reminiscence comes to us from Mr. Thomas Allan, a tall and stalwart young Scotsman who was among the listeners at the Unitarian church on Wednesday evening, February 28. Thirty-five years later, on the occasion of Swamiji's birthday, which was being celebrated in the temple of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, Mr. Allan, then president of the Society, recounted his memories of the great Swami. Happily, he did not speak extemporaneously but had prepared a manuscript of eight large pages, which is now preserved in the archives of the Society; thus his impressions come to us firsthand. After a short introduction Mr. Allan wrote:

Having heard of Swami Vivekananda and what a wonderful man he was and what a stir he made at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, also having read his book *Raja Yoga*, it was with great joy that I learned

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

of his coming from Los Angeles to this section of the State. He came to San Francisco in February, 1900, and his first [actually his second] public lecture in Oakland was given on 28th February, 1900, in the Unitarian Church, Oakland, of which Church the Reverend Benjamin Fay Mills was the Pastor. The subject of this lecture was "Similarity between the Vedanta Philosophy and Christianity." He told us always to look for similarities, for common points of interest, and never to look for differences. I was at that lecture, and the impression he made on me was, "Here is a man who KNOWS what he is talking about. He is not repeating what some other person told him. He is not relating what he thinks, he is telling what he knows." Going home from the lecture I was walking on air. When I got home I was still acting like a crazy man. When I was asked what sort of a man he was, I replied, "He is not a man, he is a god." I can never forget the impression he produced on me. To me he was a wonder, and I followed him to any of the Bay cities where he spoke.¹

In Ida Ansell's memoirs of Swamiji as published in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* one finds an addition to the above: "Edith [Mr. Allan's wife] asked him to tell her what he had said that impressed him so much, and the two most startling ideas were these: Good and evil are the obverse and reverse of the same coin; and you cannot have one without the other. We had been taught in the Home of Truth that all is good and there is no evil. The other idea that deeply impressed him was that a cow cannot tell a lie and a man can, but the cow will always be a cow, while a man can become divine."²

Mr. Allan, of whom more later, became a dedicated Vedantin, remaining so until his death at the age of eighty-nine in 1953. It is true, of course, that not all who heard Swamiji embraced the Vedanta philosophy then and there; but it is safe to say that very few ever forgot him. There was, for instance, a young man by the name of George A. Applegarth,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

who in 1900 sang in the choir of the Unitarian church and who heard a number of Swamiji's lectures. Nearly sixty years later, Mr. Applegarth's son called upon the Vedanta Society in San Francisco, seeking information about the philosophy. His father, he said, had often mentioned having heard Swami Vivekananda in Oakland. A few years thereafter (1962), a member of the Vedanta Society sought out the senior Mr. Applegarth to ask for his memories. During the course of the interview Mr. Applegarth, then eighty-four, recalled the impression the Swami had made upon his listeners so many years before :

... He was so outstanding in the portrayal of his religion that none of the other speakers could compare with him. They would have made a very poor showing if they had been called upon to speak after the Swami.... The other addresses had all been more or less complex and obscure. The Swami, on the other hand, presented a philosophy that was so simple and was presented from such a beautiful viewpoint that people were eager to hear more. He had a remarkable command of English and his lectures were full of colorful metaphors.... I was present after some of the lectures when others spoke to him. He was very approachable. He would be surrounded by many people who wanted to speak to him, so we younger people did not get very close to him.... But on one occasion he spoke in the Sunday School area [Wendte Hall] to the younger people.... I talked to many of the people who had attended his lectures. All were deeply impressed by the simplicity of his philosophy and by the richness and beauty of his English.... I remember that one of the subjects on which he lectured was "Concentration." He told us how the Hindus were trained in the practice of concentrating their minds.³

In addition to Swamiji's two lectures from the pulpit of the Unitarian church, he was to deliver in Wendte Hall two series

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

of three lectures each. The first series, which began on the evening of Wednesday, March 7, was announced in the *Enquirer* of the same date with an article whose concise heading attested clearly to Swamiji's quick renown in the city:

THE SWAMI

He will begin this evening a course of three lectures. This evening at the First Unitarian Church the Swami Vivekananda of Calcutta, India, will deliver the first of a series of popular lectures, the general subject of which is The Most Ancient Religion. To-night the title of the lecture will be The Laws of Life and Death.

When the Swami first appeared in Oakland, in a free lecture, the church was crowded, and it was supposed that people's curiosity would have been exhausted by this, but subsequently he delivered a second lecture and once more the church was crowded. The three lectures which he will deliver here to-night, tomorrow night and Monday will be pay lectures, but there is no doubt they will be very largely attended. The Swami is an unusually gifted man and considerable enthusiasm has been manifested at both of his previous appearances in Oakland.

The social column of the *San Francisco Call* informed its readers that "[Oakland] society is showing much interest in the coming series of popular lectures to be given by Swami Vivekananda, the philosopher and orator, who has lately arrived from Calcutta." And to be sure, Swamiji's "pay lectures" in Oakland drew large crowds. But we shall speak of these lectures later, for they take us too far beyond our present story.

Swamiji was at first optimistic in regard to his work in San Francisco—or, as a heretofore unpublished letter of Friday,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

March 2, to Miss MacLeod shows, he was at least not discouraged. His letter, supplied by Mrs. Frances Leggett, was written from the Pine Street Home of Truth and read:

1231 Pine Street
San Francisco

Feb. [March] 2nd 1900

Dear Joe, Your note enclosing two from France and three from India just received. I have had general good news and am happy.

Financially—I have got 300\$ at Los Angeles. About Mrs. Bowlers, she has about hundred dollars in cash. Mrs. Hendrick & herself have not paid up as yet. That money 300 in all is with her. She will send it to me whenever I write.

Rev. Benjamin Fay Mills a very popular Unitarian preacher in Oakland, invited me from here and paid the fare to San Francisco. I have spoken twice in Oakland to 1500 people each time. Last time I got from collection 30\$. I am going to have classes at 50 cents admission each.

San Francisco had one lecture the other night [February 23] at 50c each. It paid its expenses. This Monday [Sunday?] I am going to speak free—after that a class. I went to see Mrs. Hurst [Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst]. She was not at home. I left a card—so with Prof. Le-Conte [Joseph Le Conte, a well-known American geologist, then in his late seventies and a professor at the University of California].

Mary [Hale] writes that you wrote her of my coming any day to the east. I don't know. Here I have a large following ready made by my books. Will get some money, not much. St. Francis [Francis Leggett] may put the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

money in the bank for me—but can that be done without my signature? and I am here? It is good if it can be done. Did you see any possibility of my books being sold for good to any publisher?

The French invitation is all right. [An invitation to speak in September at the Congress of the History of Religions at the Paris Exposition.] But it seems impossible to write any decent paper on the subject we chose. Because if I have to lecture & make money, very little time will be left for anything else. Again I cannot find any books (Sanskrit) here. So let me try to make a little money if I can and go to France all the same but send them no paper. No scholarly work can be done in this haphazard & hurried fashion. It means time and study.

Shall I write to Mr. [Gerald] Nobel an acknowledgement and thanks? Write to me fully on these subjects if you can before you leave [for Europe]. My health is going in the same way. The gas is there more or less and this city is all climbing up. That tires me much.

With all love

Yours affly
Vivekananda

P.S. Did anybody else respond to Mrs. Leggett's call?¹

But Swamiji's work in San Francisco was slow in getting under way. According to early editions of the *Life*, "all the leading newspapers of the State" blazoned his name after each of his Oakland lectures, and "a great stir was created in the leading intellectual circles of the State."² This passage, which was evidently based on exaggerated reports, also states, or implies, that Swamiji moved directly from a crowded church in Oakland to crowded halls in San Francisco. This, actually, was not the way it was. A check of some of the leading newspapers of California does not show that Swamiji's name was blazoned therein. And according to his letters of this period,

his San Francisco lectures—those to which admission was charged—were at first not at all largely attended.

Indeed, five days after writing the above letter he was markedly discouraged. He had by then given three more lectures in San Francisco, to two of which a fifty-cent admission had been charged. "They come in crowds when there is a free lecture and very few when there is something to pay,"³ he wrote to Mrs. Bull on March 7. And to Miss MacLeod on the same day, "No money. Hard work. No result. Worse than Los Angeles."⁴ Inadequate publicity for Swamiji's early pay lectures in the busy, happy-go-lucky metropolis of San Francisco was very likely responsible for their relatively small attendance; and, to trace the cause back a step further, lack of publicity had resulted from a lack of money and help. There was no Miss MacLeod in San Francisco to interest a number of influential men in Swamiji's work; nor at the beginning of his visit did he himself know anyone of note in the city. As for Mr. Mills, who had earlier wanted to take over the management of his San Francisco lectures, he now declined to assist in any way, perhaps piqued at Swamiji's rejection of his initial proposal, perhaps afraid of losing his own following.

The pastor was at this time delivering a series of well-attended Sunday afternoon sermons at San Francisco's large Metropolitan Temple. "I went there one evening to see him," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "to ask if he would announce from his platform that Swami Vivekananda was to give a course of lectures [as Mr. Fritz had done in Los Angeles]. This was after Swamiji's first lecture, and we felt that if he could obtain some announcements of this type it would help increase the attendance. Mr. Mills refused. I did not have the temerity then that I have now," Mrs. Hansbrough added, "or I would have told him plainly what I thought of him!"⁵ (Gratifying as a few verbal jabs at the pastor might have been, it is not likely that they would have helped matters. Only big and bold type and a long, appreciative article or two in the San Francisco

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

newspapers would have drawn crowds, and these were not forth-coming.)

More than a week had passed between Swamiji's first public lecture in San Francisco and his second, which he delivered on Sunday, March 4, at Golden Gate Hall. In the *Examiner* of March 3, under the general heading "Concerts, Lectures, Etc." one could read:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE HINDU MONK,

Who represented the religion of India at the World's Fair
will lecture on

Sunday, March 4th at 3 P.M.,
At Golden Gate Hall, 625 Sutter Street,

SUBJECT, THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION ADMISSION FREE

This, it is true, was displayed eye-catchingly, and was perhaps sufficient to draw people; but there was no report of "The Science of Religion" in the papers. (Nor do any notes of it exist.) Much less conspicuous were the advertisements for the series of three lectures that Swamiji delivered the following week on the subject of his Motherland. Listed under SUNDAY MEETINGS in the Classified Ad sections of the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* was the following information:

Lectures by Swami Vivekananda at Washington Hall, Red Men's Building, 320 Post Street, Monday, March 5th; subject, "India and Its People"; Tuesday, March 6th, "Arts and Science of India"; Friday, March 9th, "Ideals of India." Single tickets, 50c; course tickets, \$1.

That was all, and these advertisements, difficult to find even

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

when one is looking for them, appeared only once. But if crowds failed to attend Swamiji's series on India, those who did attend were enthralled. Among them was Mrs. Thomas Allan, whose husband had arrived home in a state of exaltation on the evening of February 28, declaring that he had heard "not a man but a god." Mrs. Allan's first opportunity to hear Swamiji for herself had come on March 5, and in her reminiscences, first published in *Vedanta Kesari* of September 1924 and later in the *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, she recalled the experience:

Early in March 1900 the Swami Vivekananda gave a series of three lectures on "Indian Ideals" in Redmen's Hall, Union Square, San Francisco, and it was at the first lecture of this series that I had the blessed privilege of hearing him. Being in ill health, both mentally and physically, it was a great effort to go to the lecture; and as I sat in the hall waiting for the Swami to come, I began to wonder whether I had not made a mistake in coming to hear him; but all doubts vanished when the Swami's majestic figure entered the hall. ["When he walked in, clad in his terra-cotta robe," Mrs. Allan said to a fellow Vedantin years later, "his face looked golden to me. He had long blue-black hair, wavy, but not curly. And his eyes, his wonderful eyes!"] He talked for about two hours telling us of India's Ideals and taking us with him, as it were, to his own country so that we might understand him a little and be able to comprehend even in the least the great truths he taught. After the lecture, I was introduced to the Swami; but feeling over-awed by the wonderful presence, I did not speak, but sat down at a distance and watched him, while waiting for friends who were busy settling up the business connected with the lectures. After the second lecture, I was again waiting, sitting at a distance watching the Swami, when he looked across and beckoned to me to come to him. I went and stood before

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

him as he sat in a chair. He said, "Madame, if you want to see me privately, you come to the flat on Turk Street, no charge there, none of this botheration about money." I told him I should like very much to see him. He said, "Come tomorrow morning," and I thanked him.⁶

One does not like to quibble with those who shared their cherished memories of Swami Vivekananda, but for the sake of history one sometimes must, and Mrs. Allan will no doubt pardon us if we say that it could not have been after his second lecture in the series on India that she first spoke to Swamiji but after his third lecture; for it was not until then that he had moved into the flat on Turk Street. The date of this move is not unimportant in the story of his life in San Francisco. After Swamiji's second poorly attended lecture in the Indian series he was on the verge of leaving California. There seemed little reason for staying. As pointed out in the last chapter, one of his motives for coming to the West Coast had been to obtain money for his Indian work. This same motive had surely also played a part in bringing him to San Francisco; for although he had filled the Math's critical need to defray the expenses of its lawsuit against the municipality, there remained the ever-present, overall need for funds. There remained also (albatrosslike) Swamiji's debt of five thousand rupees—the sum he had borrowed from the Math in order to buy a house for his aging mother. Appended to this was the expense of bringing a lawsuit against his aunt in order to take possession of the house.

After nearly two weeks in San Francisco it seemed to Swamiji that his attempt to earn money there was not only hopeless but self-defeating. The only noticeable consequence of his work had been a decline in his health. "I have a relapse—for some days—and am feeling very bad," he wrote to Miss MacLeod on March 7. "I think lecturing every night is the cause."⁷ And to Mrs. Bull on the same date, "Now I have entirely failed in California financially. . . . There is not the least use in breaking my health in San Francisco for nothing. . . . Platform work is

nigh gone for me, and forcing it is only hastening the end. I leave here very soon. . . . I would start just now," he added, if I could make money for a passage to India without touching the 1,000 dollars in New York."⁸

This thousand dollars, which Swamiji had deposited with Mr. Leggett and which had come partly from the sale of the English edition of *Raja Yoga* and partly from money given to him for his personal use by the Maharaja of Khetri, he wanted to keep intact for help in the future support of his mother, his grandmother, his brother, and, he sometimes thought, himself. ("The thousand dollars I have in New York will bring Rs. 9 a month," he explained to Mrs. Bull, trying as he occasionally did, though rarely with consistency or success, to make financial plans; "then I bought for her [his mother] a bit of land which will bring about Rs. 6; and her old house—that will bring, say, Rs. 6. I leave the house under litigation out of consideration, as I have not got it. Myself, my mother, my grandmother and my brother will live on Rs. 20 a month easy."⁹ Twenty rupees was then equivalent to about six dollars and fifty cents; Swamiji evidently meant this to eke out the monthly stipend of Rs. 100—about thirty-two dollars and fifty cents—that the Maharaja of Khetri had been regularly contributing for the support of his mother and brothers.)

The only other money available to him was three hundred dollars that he had made in southern California. But three hundred dollars was not enough for a passage to India, and Swamiji's plan on March 7, as one can gather from his letters of that date, was to work his way home in stages. He would leave San Francisco as soon as possible for New York; in New York he would make enough money for a passage to England, where he hoped to revive his London work; from England he would voyage to India. In India he would retire for good, living not at the expense of the Math but with his mother and other members of his family.

It might be mentioned here parenthetically that since the time Swamiji had renounced the world in order to fulfill his

mission, he had been much concerned over the welfare of his mother, whom under ordinary circumstances he would have supported. As she grew older and as his mission drew to a close, his concern seems to have increased. It may appear strange that he felt so strong a love and obligation, and the question may arise, should not a sannyasin relinquish all such filial ties and duties? Yes, a sannyasin should; but Swamiji was far more than a sannyasin undertaking spiritual discipline and striving for enlightenment. He *was* enlightened, his goal had been attained years before; no rules bound him; no observance, no prohibition or practice could have meaning for him: he could not be pulled down; he had no need to be lifted up; nor was any act of his without some profound significance to be probed.

As for Bhuvaneswari Datta, she was a hero's mother. Reading Swamiji's letters in regard to her, one somehow gets the impression that she was at this time a frail, little old lady, grieving inconsolably over her son's renunciation. She was not so. In the *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* one finds the following glimpse of her as given by a Manmatha Nath Ganguli. The year was 1901 or 1902; the place, Belur Math:

One morning [Mr. Ganguli wrote] Swamiji's mother came to see him. Her very appearance commanded respect. She was a strongly built lady with large fine eyes with long eyelashes. She had a remarkably strong personality that made her obeyed without any questioning. No wonder that Swamiji had inherited these qualities from her. She went up to the verandah of the first storey and cried aloud "Viloo-oo," and her child came out of the room at once. The great Vivekananda was just like a teen-aged son to his mother. He descended the stairs along with Bhuvaneswari Devi, and then they walked in the garden-path together and conversed softly on personal matters.¹⁰

Swamiji's mother, it would seem, could endure much. Yet

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

he who was giving his life to relieve the suffering of all humanity could not bear to be the cause of pain to anyone. "All my life I have been a torture to my poor mother," he now wrote to Mrs. Bull on March 7 of 1900. "Her whole life has been one of continuous misery. If it be possible, my last attempt should be to make her a little happy. I have planned it all out. I have served the *Mother* all my life. It is done; I refuse now to grind Her axe. Let Her find other workers—I strike."¹¹

But whatever Swamiji might say, he was not one to give up. If he rebelled against continuous work, he rebelled even more impatiently against obstacles in the path of his Indian mission, and he worked on. It was just at this time, moreover, that Mrs. Hansbrough and Mrs. Aspinall rented a flat on Turk Street.

6

Swamiji had not been comfortable at the Pine Street Home of Truth. "This was natural," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "for quite a number of people were living there and he could not feel free. . . . After a week or so he said to me, 'I must get out of here.' "¹² She had taken him to the home of a friend, which stood, as the return address on his letters of March 4 and 7 tell us, at 1502 Jones Street, a location in more or less the same part of the city as the Home of Truth and easy of access, via the Jackson-Washington Street cable car, from downtown. But Swamiji had not felt at ease there either. It was at this point that Mrs. Aspinall of the Home of Truth took matters in hand. "See here," Mrs. Hansbrough quotes her as having said, "we must find a place where this man can be comfortable." A place where Swamiji could be comfortable meant a place where he could be independent, where he could hold classes, receive visitors, give individual instruction, where he could be assured of privacy, where he could dress, sing, and cook as he pleased. Mrs. Hansbrough and Mrs. Aspinall consulted the newspapers.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

In the *Examiner's* Classified Ad Section under "Flats" they found the following notice, which had been appearing since March 4:

Flats to Let: A furnished, handsome, sunny corner flat of 6 rooms; porcelain bath, tiled sink, fancy mantels; appreciated if seen; \$40; Eddy-st. cars to Scott. Apply till 4 p.m. 1719 Turk Street.

"It was a poor sort of place," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "but the best we could do for the money we could afford to spend." When she had told this to Swamiji, he had replied with one of those offhand statements that, when looked at awhile, are seen to contain spiraling depths of meaning. "That is because I am a sannyasin," he had said, "and cannot get anything good."

Mrs. Hansbrough and Mrs. Aspinall took the Turk Street flat for a month. Inasmuch as the above advertisement disappeared from the *Examiner* after March 8, it was probably on that date that Swamiji and the two women took possession, and by March 9 they had surely moved in—Mrs. Aspinall flying thereby in the face of opposition. "Mr. Aspinall did not like the idea of his wife's leaving the Home of Truth [where they were teachers] to set up the Turk Street apartment with me so that Swamiji could have a quiet place to stay," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. "At first he objected strongly to it." But Mrs. Aspinall was not to be dissuaded. "Benjamin" she had said in reply to her husband's protest, "you know that *we* do not have any truth; we just talk." Mr. Aspinall's response to this is not on record, but whatever it may have been—and what could it have been but silence?—Mrs. Aspinall had packed her bag. Nothing, one thinks, could have detained her. Weeks later, toward the end of his visit in California, Swamiji was to say to her, "Even if you had lived on the highest mountain, you would have had to come down to take care of me." "I know it, Swami," she replied.²

The flat occupied the full top floor of a three-storied house

that stood (and at this writing still stands) on the southwest corner of Turk and Seymour streets. (Strictly speaking, Seymour was not a street; rather, it was a wide alley intersecting the block, which was bounded on the west by the cross-town street of Divisadero and on the east by that of Scott. In 1900 this section of San Francisco—a part of the Western Addition—was not what people had in mind when they described the city as sparkling, lighthearted, and vibrant with charm. The Western Addition itself has been called “an exhibition of architectural lunacy.” “It had its genesis,” Charles C. Dobie wrote in *San Francisco: A Pageant* (1933), “in an era [the eighteen-seventies and eighties] that has never been surpassed for devotion to ugliness.” Today those of its frame houses that still stand have an incredibility about their ornate towers and turrets, their vestibules and porches and obsessive gimcrackery that gives them a certain enchantment. But the neighborhood in which Swamiji’s flat was located was largely devoid even of this lunacy. It was without distinction: it was neither unduly ornate nor unduly plain; neither rich nor poor, neither fashionable nor shoddy. It was a neighborhood of two- and three-family dwellings, of small houses and of few gardens. It was far from the waterfront and far, as well, from the southern hills; and while it is true that Turk Street sloped upward here almost steeply, from east to west, the hill it climbed failed to command the wide view of the Bay that made San Francisco famous. Constructed in 1877, the building itself was flat-roofed, bay-windowed, long, narrow, and ungainly; it was to any eye—one imagines—devoid of intrinsic charm. Yet, it had redeeming points: being a corner building, it caught the morning sun full on its long eastern flank, and in front and partly along the side there was space for a small garden. A few shrubs and small but sturdy trees grow there today, and though one cannot say for sure, perhaps such greenery grew there in 1900 too.

An impressive, pillared entrance on Seymour Street gave access to the ground floor, and on Turk Street, alongside the little garden plot, a long, precipitous flight of stairs ascended

to the porticoed, twin-door entry to the second and third stories. Swamiji's door was on the right. Entering it, one was at once confronted by another stairway, long and very narrow, which ascended straight and steep to the third floor. At the top, one found oneself in a hallway not much wider than the stairs. To the right the wall was solid, without doors or windows (the west side of the building abutted on another); to the left were four stained-oak doors, three that opened into rooms and and one into a closet; straight ahead some ten feet was a window that looked out upon an air shaft. To reach the parlor, where Swamiji was to hold his classes, one had to backtrack beside the railed stairwell to the front of the building, an arrangement peculiar to many upper-story flats of the period.

The front room itself was large enough for comfort—say, sixteen by fourteen feet—and its wide bay window, which faced north, overlooking Turk Street, gave it extra depth as well as extra light. A second window in the far corner faced east, allowing the morning sun to flood the room. Except for the “fancy mantels” promised in the *Examiner*, a divan and several chairs mentioned or implied in more than one reminiscence, and a register for heat that an interviewer noticed, one cannot say how the room was furnished. One can guess, however, that it was typical of the period and location—that the floor was laid with a patterned, perhaps flowered carpet, that the windows were draped and curtained, that the woodwork was dark and that the furniture, stolid and ugly in the mode of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was, like the neighborhood, neither elegant nor shabby. Again, one can guess—and one must guess, for records are not available—that the light fixtures had not yet been adapted to electricity and that at night the room, indeed the entire flat, was lit by gas.

The front parlor was separated from Swamiji's bedroom (actually a second parlor) by sliding doors, which could be thrown open to accommodate a large class. (According to Mrs. Hansbrough, when the class overflowed into Swamiji's room, a screen was placed around the couch he slept on, which

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

information helps us to furnish this room with at least a screen, a couch—and several chairs.) It was slightly smaller than the front parlor, but like it, had a bay window, which faced east.

In addition to the two parlors, another room opened off the front hall. This was a small (nine by six feet) bedroom at the Turk Street end of the house, in which Mrs. Hansbrough slept and which, she supposed, had originally been meant for a servant.

These three rooms—the two parlors and small bedroom—together with the hallway and a hall closet comprised the front half of the flat. The back half began at the air well. Here a narrow passageway jogged off to the left, ran for a few feet, made a right-angled turn and proceeded to the back of the house, giving access to the remaining rooms. On the right was the bathroom, on the left the dining room, and at the rear were the kitchen and Mrs. Aspinall's room. This last was cornered between the dining room and the kitchen, without direct entry from the hall, and was best suited, one would imagine, for a breakfast room or den.

In regard to the bathroom, it was not so up-to-date as the newspaper advertisement, which boasted of a "porcelain bath," had made out. While the other fixtures of the bathroom may have been porcelain, the bathtub was not. Mrs. Hansbrough's memory on this point was particularly vivid: "There was one item about the Turk Street flat which was distinctly different from our home in Pasadena," she related, "and which as I look back on it, had its amusing side. This was the bathtub—one of those old-fashioned things built of zinc. Porcelain tubs were still not in use everywhere. I had to go over that tub carefully every day with a stone called a bath brick. Swamiji would ask me regularly if I had washed the tub. He was most particular and exacting about it; and as I recall it now, I think the goings-over I got about that tub were more for my benefit than the tub's. Swamiji would go on at great length about it. One day I scrubbed it three times. After the third time, when he still complained that it was not clean, I said, 'Well, Swami, I

have scrubbed that tub three times, and if you can't bathe in it now, I guess you will have to go without a bath!' So he let it go and took his bath."

Aside from the bathtub, the flat seems to have been ideal for Swamiji's purpose. Not only did the two parlors open expansively one into the other, but an inner door connected the second parlor with the dining room, where he could hold informal morning interviews without stepping into the front hall.

The flat, moreover, was easily accessible from other parts of the city, and transportation, though sometimes roundabout, was not a problem. On Turk Street a cable car ran down to Market Street, with cross-town transfer points along the way; and on Eddy Street, a block north, another cable traveled back. Furthermore, the neighborhood, unlike that in which Swamiji had lived during his first season in New York, was as respectable as a cable car itself and one to which ladies would proceed unescorted and without a qualm—would, indeed, live in.

7

It was not until Swamiji moved into the Turk Street flat, deciding after all to remain in San Francisco for at least a month, that his work in the city assumed a definite form of its own. Heretofore it had had, in substance at least, a preliminary or introductory quality. Although he had found, as he said, "ready listeners by hundreds, prepared beforehand by my books,"¹ his ideas were nonetheless new—even to the members of the Home of Truth. He had still to expound the basic principles of Vedanta, either to prepare the ground for future classes or, should he not stay, to leave behind ideas that would take root of themselves and grow. As we have seen, he had lectured in San Francisco on the fundamental unity of all religious thought and striving and had given a lecture entitled "The Science of Religion." While nothing of this last remains

by which we can know what he said, its title would indicate that it, too, had been more or less of a preliminary nature.

(As far as is known, the only other lecture that Swamiji gave with this title was delivered in New York on May 13, 1895; and here again we know only the title, not the text. However, if one turns to a page or two of unidentified notes published in volume six of the *Complete Works* under the somewhat misleading heading "Religion and Science," one can find a little of what Swamiji may have said in a lecture entitled "The Science of Religion." "Experience is the only source of knowledge," the notes read in part. "In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. . . . This science of religion is based on the analysis of the human soul. It has no creed.")²

In addition, Swamiji had presented in San Francisco a picture of India's culture and ideals, showing that little understood and much maligned country in its own light and, simultaneously, uprooting from his listeners' minds the old attitudes that could choke the flow of spiritual thought.

And, then, simply by his presence, Swamiji himself, whatever the subject of his lectures may have been, had been leading those who heard him during his first two weeks in northern California to a new level of mind from where the horizons of life, losing themselves in infinity, had an altogether different look than before. Inevitably, some of his listeners recoiled from so much vastness; but others gathered around him to hear and see more, forming the nucleus of his future classes.

Among the lectures that were preliminary in both time and nature to Swamiji's main work in San Francisco one can include his first series of three lectures at Wendte Hall in Oakland, given on the evenings of March 7, 8, and 12. As a short notice in the Alameda County Section of the *San Francisco*

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Examiner stated, the course was "intended to be a general exposition of Hindu Philosophy."

In volume eight of the *Complete Works* one can find newspaper reports of these three lectures, which were entitled "The Laws of Life and Death," "The Reality and the Shadow," and "Way to Salvation." Like most newspaper write-ups of Swamiji's lectures, these remind one of the ruins of what must once have been a mighty edifice: broken and scattered cornices and columns are all that remain to us. Yet these have a grandeur still, and from them one can guess to some extent the nature of what once had been. It is clear, for instance, that during the course of the series Swamiji indeed explained some of the basic principles of Vedanta philosophy. He discussed the laws of karma and reincarnation, the concepts of Hindu cosmology, the theory of cyclic evolution and involution, and the theory of Maya. "He told how the life of man, in the view of the Hindoo, is bound in the endless chain of the law of cause and effect, how freedom can never be found in this world, and how the mind of the Hindoo people turns forever to the thought of how man can rid himself of the burden and torment of existence." Thus read the *Enquirer's* report of "The Laws of Life and Death," which is not to be found in the *Complete Works*. The report continued with a direct quotation: "'This sounds harsh to Western people,' said the Swami; 'to the people of the Anglo-Saxon race it is particularly repellent; but it is the truth, and it must be told.'"³ But if Swamiji spoke of the beginningless, endless, and inexorable laws that govern relative existence, he spoke also, and above all, of the eternal freedom and purity of the Spirit, which stands untouched and unbound by any law. "Only by escaping from life can we escape from slavery to freedom,"⁴ he said in this same lecture. And, with what must have been bomblike force: "Not how to go to heaven, but how one can stop going to heaven—this is the object of the search of the Hindu."⁵ The statement left Oakland gasping. "KEEP OUT OF HEAVEN," the *Enquirer* shouted the next day in large type; and the *San Francisco Bulletin*

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

introduced a report of Swamiji's second lecture with the news: "Swami Vivekananda... Has Set Oaklanders Thinking.... [The Swami] said that man's chiefest concern should be how not to get to heaven." The idea seemed such a startler that some two weeks later when Mrs. B. Fay Mills occupied the Unitarian pulpit in her husband's absence, she took as the subject of her sermon "Heaven and How to Escape It" and thereby drew a goodly crowd.⁶

At the completion of the well-attended Wendte Hall series the following item appeared in the *Enquirer* of March 14:

MORE LECTURES BY THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The great popularity of the course of lectures just finished by the Swami Vivekananda has been a matter of surprise to those who have been familiar with the almost empty houses that have greeted some of the lecturers that have appeared here.

At the earnest solicitations of those who have had the pleasure of listening to him, he has consented to give another course of three lectures. They will take place at Wendte Hall, Fourteenth and Castro Streets, on successive Monday evenings, beginning with March 19. The subjects are: The Manners and Customs of India; The Arts and Sciences in India; and the Ideals of Quakers.

As no more tickets will be sold than enough to comfortably fill the hall, persons desiring to hear these lectures will do well to apply to the sexton at the church during the mornings of this week.

While we are in Oakland, let us continue with Swamiji's second series of lectures at Wendte Hall, for although it will take us beyond our story, it was somewhat extraneous to his main work in San Francisco; it was, in fact, a repetition, perhaps by request, of his earlier series on India at the Red Men's Building. According to an item in the *Enquirer* of March 17,

the Oakland series was arranged by, and given for the benefit of, the Women's Alliance of the First Unitarian Church—an organization which engaged in doing good.

(In Swamiji's attempt to earn money for India, he seems never to have been able to resist giving lectures for the financial benefit of Americans. Yet he did realize a little money from his first series at Wendte Hall. "The Oakland lectures paid well," he wrote to Mrs. Leggett on March 17. What he meant by this we learn from a letter to Miss MacLeod, dated in the *Complete Works* "April, 1900," but written, it would seem, a little earlier: "Oakland work has been successful. I hope to get about \$100 from Oakland, that is all. After all, I am content," he added. "It is better that I tried.")⁸

As we have said, one purpose of Swamiji's lectures on India was to destroy prejudice; and one suspects that during his first lecture in this second Oakland series (the *Enquirer's* report of which is given in volume eight of the *Complete Works* under the title "The People of India") he delivered a few direct blows. "It is apparent," the *Enquirer* editorialized touchily, "that the Swami, educated and intellectual man that he is, is no admirer of Western civilization. He has evidently been a good deal embittered by the talk about child widows, the oppression of women and other barbarisms alleged against the people of India, and is somewhat inclined to resort to the *tu quoque* in reply."⁹

One looks to the old Oakland papers to see if anything in particular had called forth a sharp reply from Swamiji. Sure enough, the evening before, a missionary who had recently returned from Burma (there were several such in California) had spoken her mind about Vedantism. "VEDANTISM IN INDIA," the report of her talk was headed in the *Enquirer* of March 19. "An Interesting Lecture By a Returned Missionary. Tells How Many Buddhists Dedicate Themselves to Their God in Most Cruel Fashion." There was no attempt to disguise the fact that this interesting talk had been directed against Swamiji. The article began: "Apropos of the recent lecture delivered in

this city by the profound Hindoo priest Swami Vivekananda, upon the power and theory of the old Vedant religion, Mrs. A. Haswell, a returned missionary from India [actually from Burma], told last evening at the 23d Avenue Baptist Church of the practical results of the religion as she has seen it. . . . She said in part: . . .” We need not reproduce what Mrs. Haswell said in part. It was the old story—the story of India’s religion as told by nineteenth-century Americans staring at the surface of a totally foreign culture, insensible to the living spirit that permeated and animated it, to its traditions and goals, to its subtleties and depths of meaning, insensible, indeed, to everything but the fact, glaring to be sure, that India was not the Protestant West.

Vitriolic condemnation of his country in the name of Christian service never failed to anger Swamiji; but his anger was not on behalf of his countrymen alone. Arrogance, prejudice, lack of sympathy for the beliefs, ways, and trials of others were, he well knew, the enemies of America as well as of India. Very likely he made somewhat the same observation in Oakland as he had made in Pasadena in his lecture “Women of India”: “Nations in the vigour of their youth think that they can do anything and everything: ‘We are the gods of the earth. We are the chosen people.’ They think that God Almighty has given them a charter to rule over all the world, to advance His plans, to do anything they like, to turn the world upside down. They have a charter to rob, murder, kill; God has given them this, and they do that because they are only babes. So empire after empire has arisen—glorious, resplendent—now vanished away—gone, nobody knows where; it may have been stupendous in its ruin.”¹⁰ But imperial babes could have no place in the centuries ahead when mutual understanding and service between the peoples of the world would constitute their only hope of survival. One of Swamiji’s dreams of which he often spoke was of an exchange of ideas and achievements between East and West. He gave voice to this in San Francisco, as he had elsewhere in the United States: “Send us mechanics to

teach us how to use our hands," he is quoted by Mr. Allan as having said during his lecture series on India, "and we will send you missionaries to teach you spirituality."¹¹ It was a dream that not only reached far into the future but was itself, perhaps, the seed of future fact.

One can find the *Enquirer's* brief report of Swamiji's second lecture of the series on India, "Arts and Sciences in India," in volume four of the *Complete Works*. The introductory paragraph of the report, however, has not been reprinted and is worth giving here:

"Arts and Sciences in India" was the topic under which the Swami Vivekananda was introduced before the audience in Wendte Hall last evening in the Unitarian Church. But as he acknowledged himself, he touched nearly every subject but the one upon which he was elected to speak. Nevertheless, the Swami held the attention of his audience, as was demonstrated by the many questions which were put to him after his address.

The lecture (also reported upon in an almost identical write-up by the *Tribune*) had been a provocative one in many respects, and once again a statement of Swamiji's was blazoned in the *Enquirer* in bold type: "Declares the Anglo-Saxon People Have Always Been Badly Fitted for Art." Indeed, Swamiji did not pussyfoot. When one is able to compare the original versions of his extemporaneous lectures with those in the *Complete Works*, one now and then finds that in the normal course of editing (for in the nature of things all extemporaneous talks must be edited) his forthright and vivid sentences have undergone a little mellowing—judicious in its day. Such was the case in this instance. Commenting upon English poetry, Swamiji had not said, "Merely the rhyming of words is not good. It is not the most civilized thing in the world."¹² What he had said, as reported by the *Enquirer* of March 27, was: "This rhyming

business of words is not even fitted for the language of dogs. It is the most uncivilized thing in the world."

The third lecture, "The Ideals of India" (not, after all, "The Ideals of Quakers," as the *Enquirer* had announced on March 14), was not reported upon by any of the newspapers, and thus we have no information about it—not even such as newspapers afford. It must be said that the brief reports of the first two lectures of the series give us very little indication of the charm and life that permeated them. Only by turning to the reminiscences of Mr. Frank Rhodehamel (an ardent lecture-goer, whom we shall meet later on) can one catch a glimpse of the sheer enchantment with which Swamiji filled his talks on India. He was the teacher par excellence, bringing the minds of his listeners into almost breathless concentration—one moment through the means of shock, the next through that of delight. Whether the art was conscious with him or not, he was as incapable of dullness or of dryness as the God he taught. "During his series of lectures on The Ideals of India," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote (and it seems clear that he was referring to the Oakland series), "the fact was disclosed that he was a wonderful story-teller. Here, perhaps, he was at his best. He gave life to the ancient tales by telling them in his inimitable fashion, the subject giving full play to his unsurpassed power of interpretation, and to that wealth of facial expression which was his greatest personal charm. 'I love to tell these stories,' he said. 'They are the life of India. I have heard them since babyhood. I never get tired of telling them.'"¹³

Indeed Swamiji never tired of talking about anything connected with his beloved Motherland. Just before ascending the platform to give a lecture on India in San Francisco (very probably his lecture of March 5 at the Red Men's Building) he said to Mr. Allan, who was then acting as an usher, "When I get started on the subject of India, I never know when to stop. If I go on too long, attract my attention." "He began promptly at eight o'clock," Mr. Allan recalled, "and when it got to be ten o'clock we decided that I should attract his

attention by swinging my watch from its chain. Standing at the back of the hall, I raised my hand and swung the watch. Swamiji quickly noticed. 'There they are,' he said, 'swinging the watch for me to stop when I have hardly got started.' " And then, as Mr. Allan often told the story in later years, "he went right on with the lecture."¹⁴

The second Wendte Hall series, which has taken us into April, completed Swamiji's work in Oakland. He had given eight lectures in all at the Unitarian church, each time traveling to and fro, sometimes in bad weather, between San Francisco and Oakland by streetcar, ferry, train, and again streetcar, accompanied by Mr. Allan, Mrs. Hansbrough, Mrs. Aspinall, perhaps many others. He had lectured with vigor and after each lecture had answered many questions from the audience.

"On one occasion," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote, "after persistent queries by a number of persons, it occurred to someone that they were plying the Swami too insistently with questions, and he remarked to that effect. 'Ask all the questions you like—the more the better,' was the Swami's good-natured reply. 'That is what I am here for, and I won't leave you till you understand.' The applause was so prolonged that he was obliged to wait till it subsided before he could continue. At times he literally startled people into belief by his answers. To the question, after a lecture on Reincarnation [very probably "The Laws of Life and Death"], 'Swami, do you remember your past life?' he answered quickly and seriously, 'Yes, clearly, even when I was a little boy.' "¹⁵

At other times he brought down the house—or, as Mr. Rhodehamel put it, "relieved the tenseness of embarrassing situations"—with his humor. "Observe his parry," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote in illustration, "to the question incredulously hurled at him at the close of a lecture which culminated in an impassioned outburst on the glory of God-Consciousness: 'Swami, have you seen God?' 'What!' he returned, his face lighting up with a happy smile, 'Do I look like it,—a big fat man like me?' "¹⁶

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

It would seem probable that often Swamiji did not arrive home from Oakland until very late at night. But time was of small consequence. "One night," Mr. Allan related, "when the Reverend B. Fay Mills was walking with him to the train that would take him to the Oakland mole, Mr. Mills said, 'Swami, we must hurry to catch the train.' Swamiji made no change in his pace. 'Is there not another train?' he asked."¹⁷

(Mr. Allan does not finish this dialogue; there must have been more. Mr. Mills would have, or *should* have, said, "Yes, Swami, there will be another train; but to miss the ferry at this hour of the night will mean a half hour's wait for another." Whereupon Swamiji, still not changing his pace, would have answered, "What of that?" "You Indians," Mr. Mills would have observed, "have no idea of time." And Swamiji would have retorted, as he did at another time in a like circumstance, "Yes, you live in time; we live in Eternity."¹⁸ And thus, still at Swamiji's unhurried pace, they would have proceeded to the train stop.)

In its early editions, its authors depending on the only information then available, the *Life* states that Swamiji formed a Vedanta center in Oakland. Recent research has disclosed no valid evidence that he did so. But the city was connected nevertheless with the future growth of the Vedanta movement in northern California. As we have seen, Swamiji's lectures in Oakland were, in a sense, of a piece with his preliminary lectures in San Francisco. He reached out, as it were, across the Bay to gather students into the heart of his work, and many entered, becoming imbued forever with his spirit. Several years after Swamiji had passed away, a number of Vedanta students in Oakland, including Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rhodehamel and the Misses Sarah and Rebecca Fox, formed a study and discussion group under the leadership of the young man named Gurudasa who, as the reader may remember, had heard Swamiji lecture at the New York Vedanta Society in November of 1899. Gurudasa had been given his first monastic vows by Swami

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Abhedananda and had come to California in the winter of 1900 in order to live at Shanti Ashrama, of which more later. After spending several years at the Retreat, he traveled in 1906 to India, where he remained five years. Returning to California, he became the acknowledged, though unofficial, leader of the informal group of Vedanta students in Oakland. In 1922 he again went to India and at the Belur Math received the vows of sannyasa and the name Swami Atulananda. For the remainder of his long and spiritually fruitful life (he passed away in 1966 at the age of ninety-seven) he lived in India, becoming well known for his high degree of spiritual attainment.

The group that had gathered around Gurudasa kept Swamiji's teachings alive in Oakland, and the city continued to play a part in the Vedanta movement. In 1931 Swami Ashokananda, who had just begun his ministry at the Vedanta Society in San Francisco, extended his lecturing activities to Oakland, mindful that Swamiji had worked there. From the start the Swami's weekly lectures in Oakland were well attended and continued so until 1939. It was in that year, on the basis of the evident interest in Vedanta in the East Bay, that the Swami opened a branch center of the Vedanta Society of Northern California in Berkeley. A temple was built near the University campus, Miss Fox and her sister Fredrica (Rebecca had died) helping to finance it. The Berkeley center is today thriving; and thus one finds a continuity of Vedantic thought in the East Bay from the time of Swamiji's first lecture at the Unitarian church to the present. The fires he kindled do not die; nor do they blaze only under the name of Vedanta. The First Unitarian Church in Oakland has not forgotten him. Its present minister, Dr. Arnold Crompton, spoke to me of Swami Vivekananda as "the great saint of our time" and mentioned his plan to commemorate Swamiji's lectures in the church by placing a bronze plaque on the pulpit—next to one that will commemorate a sermon given from the same pulpit (though in an earlier building) by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Throughout the weeks that Swamiji lived at 1719 Turk Street he was lecturing almost every evening in either downtown San Francisco or the East Bay. Between March 4 and April 18, a period of forty-six days that overlapped his stay at Turk Street at both ends, he delivered at least forty-two public lectures; and when we extend this count to include the three lectures he gave in February (one in San Francisco and two at the Unitarian church in Oakland), the twelve or more classes that he held at the Turk Street flat, and four classes on the Gita held at the end of May, we find that he spoke in all, to large audiences and small, at least sixty-one times. "At least," because, as I mentioned earlier, one can never be sure that a list of Swamiji's lectures or classes during any given period is exhaustive. Again and again a new discovery will show him to have burst the limits one had thought to set for him. But even sixty-one talks—each given in the full vigor of what he must have felt would be his last intensive public mission to the world—are a great many, and there is no denying that the tremendous wave of spiritual power that Sri Ramakrishna brought to earth swept over the Bay Area in full flood.

It was long thought that almost all of Swamiji's lectures in San Francisco, and all of those which he was to give later in Alameda, were lost to everyone but those who heard them. There had been no Mr. Goodwin to take them down; the San Francisco newspapers had, on the whole, been remiss in their reporting, and apparently no one in the audiences had thought to take notes. But with the same luck—if one may use so poor a word—that attended Swamiji's mission throughout its course, it happened that among those who heard his lectures in San Francisco and Alameda was a young woman who was taking this opportunity to exercise a rusty shorthand. Her name was Ida Ansell. Although Miss Ansell took notes at Swamiji's lectures for the sake of her shorthand, she did not attend them solely for that reason. She was at the time an ardent student, a

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

patient, and an admirer of a Miss Lydia Bell, leader of the California Street Home of Truth, and, through her, had become interested, somewhat mistily, in Eastern thought. In an unpublished letter written forty-six years later she told the story from the start:

I was an only child and very lonely [she wrote]. My mother came to California for her health when I was about eight years old, and I was boarded with a friend near Boston. Two years later I was sent to my mother, but had become lame in the meantime. That increased the loneliness, and instead of usual childhood doings, I developed too much imagination and too little discrimination. Continual trouble with the hip sent me first to doctors, then to Christian Science, then to the Home of Truth (Mrs. Miltz), then to Miss Bell, also a Home of Truth leader [in San Francisco], but one who had been active in the beginning of the Theosophical Society in New York, and consequently her teaching was not exclusively Christian. It was at her Home of Truth [on California Street] that I was staying for a few weeks when Swamiji came to San Francisco. My favorite reading had been such books as "On the Heights of the Himalayas," "In the Sanctuary," Bulwer-Lytton's "Zanoni," "Joseph Balsamo" by Alexandre Dumas, etc. [all works that dealt romantically with the occult and supernatural]. Now was added "Light on the Path" [a Theosophical work], and Miss Bell had just begun a daily class on the Gita. Consequently, Swamiji was, to my mind, an Adept, a Mahatma, and I went to every lecture that I could. That was the foundation for any understanding. [Miss Ansell attended Swamiji's first lecture at the Unitarian church in Oakland, but did not take notes. She did not, in fact, take notes until almost three weeks later, on March 16. Swamiji had by then given at least thirteen lectures in the Bay Area.]

I was not a professional stenographer at that time; my

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

one thought was to become a teacher of music. But an opportunity had come between grammar school and high school, to take a course in shorthand, which I accepted, thinking it would be fun to have it in high school. I had to leave high school after one year [because of a nervous breakdown], and never used the shorthand, except to substitute for a friend during her vacation, until I became a student and patient of Miss Bell. Then for practice I took all her Sunday lectures and later Swamiji's lectures. She spoke very deliberately and I could get every word which was not possible with Swamiji. But the humiliating part is that while I transcribed her lectures regularly each week, I put his away, hoping to write them up later.¹

Almost half a century passed before Miss Ansell looked again at her notes of Swamiji's lectures and, at the request of Swami Ashokananda, began to transcribe them. By this time, the notes were not only "cold," but many of the squibbles had become archaic, outmoded by a new system which she had, years since, made her own. Added to this was the difficulty that she had often been unable to keep up with Swamiji's torrential flow of words and the further difficulty that she had always become so charmed by his manner of telling a story that her pencil had been suspended as she watched him. Many were the gaps in her notes, and the transcription of them—difficult, laborious, and often frustrating—took some six months of unremitting work to bring to completion.

Miss Ansell was living in Los Angeles when in 1945 she undertook this task. As she completed each transcription she mailed it, together with its duplicate copy, to Swami Ashokananda in San Francisco. I am fortunate enough to have read the many letters she addressed to the Swami both during the progress of her work and after its completion, when four of the transcripts, edited and made whole, were sent to her for her opinion. There is, one finds, an unfolding of a drama in her

letters, for she began her task with misgivings and ended by rejoicing. A few excerpts will tell the story.²

On July 19, 1945, when Miss Ansell sent her first transcript to Swami Ashokananda, her accompanying letter was full of apology, if not despair:

Just now with many misgivings, I am sending you what I can read of the notes taken of a lecture given by Swamiji on March 16, 1900. The blank spaces indicate either that something was omitted or that I could not read what was written. I could have filled in some of the blanks, but you asked me not to try to "make them nice," and it seems best to send just what I can read, without making any additions or changes. Then you can know just what material there is, and can tell me whether or not to try to continue. I feel I have committed a sort of sacrilege. None of the other lectures are much better, and some of them even more scrappy.

The difficulty is age—of the typewriter, the notes and the writer. The machine is so old, the letter "o" so sharp, it punches holes in the paper. The notes were taken 45 years ago by an amateur stenographer unfamiliar with the subject matter. . . . They are being transcribed by a decrepit old woman, of whom the less said the better. . . .

As time went on, Miss Ansell became more confident that her scraps of notes would somehow be made whole:

It is almost ten years [she wrote on September 15, 1945] since Mrs. Allan told you I had notes of Swamiji's lectures and you asked me to transcribe them. I had never had any hope of having any complete lectures published, but kept them all these years hoping sometime to transcribe what I could and send them to Gurudas for *Prabuddha Bharata* as "Excerpts from Swamiji's lectures in San Francisco and Alameda," giving typed copies to a few

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Vedanta friends. . . . If I had done that, or if I had given them to anyone else, I would have omitted all the disconnected portions. In sending them to you, I am including everything that I can read, no matter how disjointed it seems, feeling sure that you will know what to eliminate and what to keep, and also sure that everybody will enjoy them much more after you have edited them. So, even if it takes longer . . . it seems the right thing to do. . . . I would rather give them to you than anyone else, not only because they were taken in San Francisco and I feel they belong there, but also because the few lectures that I have heard you give are more like Swamiji's than any others that I have heard. He never thought of time and was always completely informal and spontaneous.

When Miss Ansell wrote the above passage, she had transcribed less than half the lecture notes. Except for a vacation that she allowed herself in December, she worked on through the remainder of the year, transcribing her notes at the rate of about one set a week. Her letters to Swami Ashokananda continued throughout the fall of 1945, until at the end of December and the beginning of January she completed the transcriptions of Swamiji's three Gita talks and sent them off with their duplicates to San Francisco.

It so happened that on January 4 of 1946, the day she mailed the last of her transcripts to Swami Ashokananda, she received from him a typed copy of "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?"—the lecture he had chosen to edit first for inclusion in *The Voice of India*, the magazine then being published by the Vedanta Society of Northern California.

Last night [she wrote on January 6 of 1946] Haridas read the lecture to me, and I followed the shorthand notes and we were both happy. It is truly Swamiji's spirit throughout. Almost every blank, even the big gaps, you have filled without any break in the continuity of the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

thought. It is the same person speaking. I am very glad I did not attempt any editing but gave you just the notes that I could read, crude and incomplete as they were. I was so unhappy over them, but you have restored all the power and beauty of Swamiji's words. How could you do it? . . . It makes me feel sure that once in my life I made a right decision in sending you all the notes.

Four of Ida Ansell's transcripts, as edited by Swami Ashokananda, were published in the 1946 issues of *The Voice of India*. Reading the typed copies in advance of publication, Miss Ansell expressed increasing pleasure and on February 27, 1947, summed up her reactions: "Swami Turiyananda used to say, 'Mother can make the mouse a lion.' She didn't make the mouse a lion in this case, but she put the work of a mouse in the hands of a lion who could use it at the time it was most needed."

In the meanwhile, however, a worry had arisen in Miss Ansell's mind. As early as January, 1946, Swami Ashokananda had informed her that *The Voice of India* would be discontinued at the end of that year for an indefinite period. Would he, then, she wondered, continue to edit the transcripts? "I would rather they be edited by you than anyone else," she wrote in January of 1946, "—and would not like to give them to anyone else as they are now." A few days later she gave Swami Ashokananda full rights to the sixteen remaining transcripts and requested again that no one else be allowed to edit them. She was assured that her trust would not be violated. Two years later, in February of 1948, she wrote, still worried:

I am very happy about your editing Swamiji's lectures, but if you cannot do it, please don't give them to anyone else in their present form. I did give them to the Vedanta Society there, not only because I felt they belong there, but because you will do the editing in a way no one else could.

Miss Ansell was again assured that her transcriptions

would not be given to anyone else, and there the matter rested.

This, however, was not the last chapter of the story of her shorthand notes. Swami Ashokananda's health, never good, became worse, other urgent matters were occupying his time, and the exacting work of editing Swamiji's lectures had to be postponed. The publication of *The Voice of India*, moreover, remained suspended, and thus Miss Ansell's transcripts, it would have seemed to her, suffered a stillbirth. Understandably, she was anxious to bring out the sixteen remaining lectures, and once again she went about the process of transcribing her shorthand notes—this time giving them to *Vedanta and the West* for publication. Unfortunately, she was to see only one of her second set of transcripts in print. The first lecture that was published appeared in January of 1955; she passed away on January 31 of that year at the age of seventy-eight.

But however that may be, readers now have the benefit of Miss Ansell's second transcriptions of sixteen of Swamiji's lectures. These transcripts, which are indeed precious and which one can today find in the latest editions of the *Complete Works*, consist of the consecutive sentences that had made her so happy to come upon in her notebooks. The "scrappy" parts—the disconnected words and phrases—that she had conscientiously typed out in 1945 she had as conscientiously omitted in later years, substituting for them three dots. "If I had given [the notes] to anyone else, I would have omitted all the disconnected portions," she had written to Swami Ashokananda in September of 1945. And to this word she was true.

(In *Vedanta and the West*, as also in the *Complete Works*, Miss Ansell's second transcripts have been printed with interpolated words and phrases placed in brackets, and omissions have been indicated by ellipses. For the careful student of Swamiji's lectures these dots and bracketed words are certainly of value. But in quoting from these lectures, as I shall do later on, I shall omit them for the sake of more fluent reading and also to avoid confusion with my own brackets and omission marks.)

Swamiji's evening lectures, to which admission was charged, were, as we shall see, given in groups, or series, of three. In addition, he gave a free lecture in San Francisco every Sunday, generally in the afternoon. He delivered five such Sunday lectures, which in themselves formed a series that could have been entitled "The Great Teachers of the World"—or, more accurately, "The Great Teachings of the World"—and that was in part an illustration of his teachings on the harmony of religions.

Although this Sunday series almost spanned the main body of Swamiji's work in San Francisco—beginning on March 11 with the first known lecture that he gave after his move to Turk Street, "Christ's Message to the World," and closing on April 8 with his climactic and provocative lecture, "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?"—it will be more convenient to discuss these Sunday lectures (at least the first four) in a group rather than to take them up singly and in their chronological place. This is the method I shall follow throughout in writing of Swamiji's lectures in the Bay Area, for his lecture-series were so interwoven one with the other that to discuss his single lectures in their chronological order rather than as groups of three (or five) would only lead to confusion. First, then, the Sunday series.

According to the information given in the city's Sunday morning papers of March 11, Swamiji delivered "Christ's Message to the World" at Golden Gate Hall that morning at eleven o'clock. Very probably Miss Ansell was not present at the lecture, for as she told Swami Ashokananda, she could find "no notes or mention of it anywhere."¹ As for the San Francisco newspapers, they gave no report of it. In fact, the only available reference to this lecture on Christ is a passing mention of it in the unpublished memories of Mrs. George Roorbach, which were taken down fifty years later during the course of a conversation. In 1900 Mrs. Roorbach, of whom

more later, was a leader of the Alameda Home of Truth. "I heard of Swami and went to his lectures, every one I could get to," she recalled. "Of course, he blew the top out of our minds." When Mrs. Roorbach was asked if she remembered any outstanding lecture, she replied, "I don't think one was better than another, but I remember he gave one on the life and teachings of Jesus. I thought it was wonderful that he could make it so understandable and inspiring—much more so than our own ministers can. He gave it a different turn; he explained that God came in many forms."²

With this hint we can guess that Swamiji's San Francisco lecture on Christ was, in some respects at least, similar to that in southern California. As the reader will remember, he had pointed out in Los Angeles that in the cyclic rise and fall of nations and races "a huge wave comes, sometimes a tidal wave—and always on the topmost crest of the wave is a shining soul, the Messenger." "Not any one of these Prophets is born to rule the world for ever," he had continued. "By studying the lives of all these great Messengers, we find that each, as it were, was destined to play a part, and a part only; that the harmony consists in the sum total, and not in one note."³

In connection with Śwamiji's lecture on Christ, a portion of the brief reminiscences of Christina Albers may be pertinent. Miss Albers, a poet, was later to contribute often to *Prabuddha Bharata* and to write several books, such as *The Ramayana in Verse*, *The Life of Buddha for Children*, and *Ancient Tales of Hindustan*. Her memories of one of Swamiji's San Francisco lectures were first published in *Prabuddha Bharata* of August 1938, and later in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*; but of which lecture she was writing, she does not say. In many respects her article could apply to all; yet in one respect it could apply particularly to "Christ the Messenger," for Swamiji was not well on that day. The previous week he had had a relapse in health, and his trips to and from Oakland, his nightly lectures at Wendte Hall and in San Francisco could not have

improved matters. In fact, on Sunday, March 11, he had a bad cold.

When he rose to go to the platform [Miss Albers wrote] it seemed an effort on his part. He walked with a heavy gait. I noticed that his eyelids were swollen, and he looked like one who suffers pain. He stood for a while in silence before he spoke, and I saw a change. His countenance brightened, and I thought his very features were different now. He began to speak, and there was a transformation. The soul-force of the great man became visible. I felt the tremendous force of his speech—words that were felt more than they were heard. I was drawn into a sea of being, of feelings of a higher existence, from which it seemed almost like pain to emerge when the lecture was finished. And then those eyes, how wonderful! They were like shooting stars—lights shooting forth from them in constant flashes.⁴

While a bad cold did not, could not, stand as a barrier to the radiant flow of Swamiji's spiritual power, it was at least partly responsible for a change in his plans. He had intended to be present that Sunday afternoon at one of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst's musicales in Berkeley (which is why, perhaps, he had given his lecture on Christ in the morning rather than in the afternoon as was generally his custom on Sundays). Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, widow of the mining magnate and United States senator George Hearst, and mother of the young but already powerful newspaper czar, William Randolph Hearst, was immensely wealthy, influential, and noted for her many philanthropies. She was, indeed, one of the Bay Area's most prominent women. Her Sunday afternoon musicales, which had been taking place since the beginning of the year in "Hearst Hall"—a newly built "cathedral-like" structure adjoining her residence in Berkeley—were *events*, both social and cultural. Although they were intended primarily for the benefit of university students and professors, Mrs. Hearst extended

invitations to her friends and to friends of friends, and she had invited Swamiji.

As Swamiji wrote to Miss MacLeod on March 2, he had called on Mrs. Hearst during his first few days in northern California and had found her not at home.⁵ It was Swamiji's good friend Emma Thursby who had supplied him with a letter of introduction. (According to a newspaper note, Miss Thursby had been in southern California that winter.)⁶ A singer of international popularity and acclaim, she knew many influential people in many cities throughout the United States and Europe. She had given Swamiji other letters of introduction at other times, including an earlier one to Mrs. Hearst herself (which he had not used) when the latter was in Washington, D.C.

As it happened, Swamiji did not go to Mrs. Hearst's musicale. "I could not go," he wrote to Miss MacLeod. "I had a bad cold. So that was all."⁷ From Mrs. Allan, who was at the Turk Street flat that Sunday afternoon, one learns that there was an additional reason for his not attending the musicale. "When the time grew near for Swamiji to go," Mrs. Allan related during one of her many verbal recollections of those days, "someone said, 'It is time for you to get ready, Swami.' He replied, 'I am not going.' And he didn't go. Several days later I asked him why he hadn't gone. 'All Mrs. Hearst wants is to lionize me,' he said. 'Why should I go?'" Swamiji was often the despair of those of his friends who sought to introduce him to the "right people." Yet it is probable that he met Mrs. Hearst later on; for according to Mrs. Hansbrough, she offered him one thousand dollars for his Indian work.⁸

Swamiji gave the second lecture of his Sunday series on the afternoon of March 18. Its title was "Buddha's Message to the World," and, like the remaining three lectures of the series, it was delivered in Union Square Hall, on the south side of Post Street between Powell and Mason streets. Golden Gate Hall, where he had given his first two lectures in San Francisco, as well as his Sunday lecture on Christ, was now left behind.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

We do not know the reason for this; but one advantage of the halls on Post Street was that they were easy of access from Swamiji's flat. He could take a cable car, travel down Turk (with a jog north at Mason) to the intersection of Eddy, Powell, and Market streets, and from there either transfer to another cable at the famous Powell Street turntable or walk the four blocks north to Post. Because Swamiji lost his way easily in American cities, this directness of route had its value. As to the relative sizes of Golden Gate Hall and Union Square Hall, we can only guess; both were destroyed in 1906, and no information has so far been found regarding the seating capacity of either. We can suppose, however, that the latter was fairly large, seating about six hundred. "His Sunday audience usually ran from five to six hundred people,"⁹ Mrs. Hansbrough recalled. And we learn from a recently discovered newspaper report (given below) that on Sunday, March 18, Union Square Hall was crowded.

In the audience, it is interesting to note, was a young man by the name of Ernest C. Brown. Mr. Brown, who was to become an ardent devotee and member (later, president) of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, had come for the first time to hear Swamiji. Like Miss Sarah Fox, he had heard of the Swami through Mr. Paul Militz, the religious teacher in Oakland. "[Mr. Militz] was a German-Pole," Mr. Brown related in his reminiscences as published in the London magazine *Vedanta for East and West* (July-August, 1959), "a great patriot and lover of freedom. One Sunday he said: 'Now, you folks have been wanting me to show you a real renouncer such as I have been telling you about—one who has renounced everything for the Truth. Very well, a great teacher has recently come from India. His name is Swami Vivekananda. I advise you all to go and hear him. He is one of the greatest teachers and greatest ascetics India has ever produced.' The hall was empty the next Sunday morning, much to his surprise and astonishment. The only people left in the hall were an elderly German lady and myself." In the afternoon of what must have

been the following Sunday (March 18), Mr. Brown and the elderly German lady also went to hear Swamiji. His memoirs continue:

...He was not there when we arrived, so we took our seats and waited. Then someone in an orange-coloured robe walked from a little side-room out on the platform and I said to myself "Who is that? An emperor?" His walk was that of a god, a man accustomed to ruling. When he sat down the audience burst into tumultuous applause. But he sat there unmoved, his face reflecting the perfect calm within. Then he rose and just held up his hands with palms facing the audience, and at once there was a silence that you could feel, it was so tense, so palpable. I said to my companion, "Who is this person who can make a large audience like this yield and in a moment give silence? He is obviously accustomed to commanding others." Then he began his lecture. We listened, and at the close I went up to shake hands with him. Other people were lining up so I went along too. Then he said a few words which were not of significance to me then, because I did not know his greatness. I did not appreciate them until years afterwards.¹⁰ [Mr. Brown did not say what those words were.]

"Buddha's Message to the World" was the second lecture during which Miss Ansell practiced her shorthand (the first having been an evening lecture given in San Francisco two days before, entitled "Concentration"), and her transcript of it was among the four that were edited for *The Voice of India* and subsequently published in volume eight of the *Complete Works*. Thus we have an excellent account of it. But as has already been pointed out, Miss Ansell did not by any means take down Swamiji's every word, and in this particular instance, the San Francisco press has contributed to our knowledge. On March 19, 1900, the *Chronicle* printed a fairly long report of the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

lecture. Although this journalistic paraphrase (it is not a strictly verbatim report) is even more scanty and much less satisfactory than Miss Ansell's notes, it contains two or three details that she missed, and for the sake of these I shall give it here in full. (As far as can be discovered to date, this article and the short accounts of "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," which I have reproduced earlier, constitute the only newspaper reports of Swamiji's San Francisco lectures.)

VIVEKANANDI ON BUDDHISM. THE HINDOO LECTURES TO A CROWDED HOUSE. HIS VIEWS ON ONE OF THE RELIGIONS OF THE ORIENT.

A Warm Tribute to the Philosopher and His Teachings—
Some of the Principles Expounded.

The Swami Vivekanandi, apostle of the Vedanta Philosophy, spoke to a crowded house in Union-square Hall yesterday on "Buddha's Message to the World," saying in part:

"Buddhism is the most important religion of history, representing the most tremendous religious movement the world ever saw, the most gigantic spiritual wave that ever swept human society. Indian society 700 years before Christ had reached one of its periods of decadence, characteristic of the history of Oriental races, and invariably followed by another uplifting. When a fighting race once slips its foot it never recovers. India was then, like the Jewish nation prior to Christ's advent, in the hands of a priesthood which was crowding the people's heads with hideous, degrading superstitions, a body of men standing between the people and God, or spirituality. This priesthood loved power, and took every possible means to secure and hold it, by means of secrecy and abracadabras, just as men are doing among you to-day with their secret societies and their occult messages which

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

are intended only for them. And you are impressed by them. You do not care for plain truths and plain words, although all the great truths ever spoken, like the sermon on the mount, were in the simplest language. The less you understand, the better you feel, and the more you revere. The day is coming when you will be educated out of this, but it is not here yet.

There are those among you who say that people are not yet ready for truth. And you hide it, dilute it, water it! The world is no better for hidden truths. Can the world be worse than it is to-day here among you? You, who are like so many wolves, throwing yourselves upon each other's throats, living and thriving at the expense of your fellows, under the competitive system! Buddha found awful practices in his day to keep people away from the truth. If a man of the lower caste uttered the name of a Brahman, his stomach was cut open.

If by some accident one overheard the priests reading from the sacred books, molten lead was poured into his ears. Yet many good people then, as to-day, were content to let these things go on, so long as they were safe and comfortable. Buddha had a heart to feel for the sufferings of others, a brain to think out the remedy, and a hand to do the work before him. The message that he brought was the essence of the truths in the Vedas. It was tremendously bold, even for India, where, whatever other oppression may exist, religious intolerance has never been known.

Buddha declared that all the misery in this life was due to selfishness. He thundered against priests and ceremonies and the sacrifice of animals and preached, above all, love for man. This is the Buddhist point of view. We Hindoos claim that we understand Buddha better; that he meant that men were all one and that God exists, a principle and a spirit, nearer to you than you are to your own soul because he is your own soul. How dare you cast God away from you with a "thou"? Always hereafter say

"I". Ceremonies are without meaning. Work is prayer and higher than all your talks. Buddha stood for human equality; he maintained that there should be no distinctions as to the highest attainments for men and women, and that women should go to the altar. He broke the bondage of the Indian races. Greater than his doctrines was Buddha's fearless, loving self-denying life, and, although I am not a Buddhist, this has always appealed most to me, as well as has his noble death, when he protested with his last words that his followers should not worship him, but live for the principles for which he had lived. His doctrines were in a sense negative, fitted to the times. I can say the same thing that Buddha said when I declare "There is nothing but God in the universe. He pervades all, is in all, is all."

As will be clear from a comparison of "Buddha's Message to the World" as given in the *Complete Works* with the above report, the latter is not a full or altogether clear exposition of what Swamiji said. The *Chronicle* reporter, to be sure, jotted down some things Miss Ansell had obscured or let slide—notably, the wonderful sentence, so characteristic of this period of Swamiji's mission: "How dare you cast God away from you with a 'thou'? Always hereafter say 'I'." But the reporter failed on the whole, as Miss Ansell did not, to catch Swamiji most salient points. Throughout this lecture there is an interplay of past and present, of Buddha's message to the world and of Swamiji's own message. Telling in one breath of the ancient prophet who spoke to ancient India, Swamiji, in the next breath, was the modern prophet speaking to the modern West. One moment, for instance, the audience heard of how Buddha had brushed aside the superstitions, the priestcraft, the rituals, the metaphysical and philosophical niceties and complexities of his time to declare the full, simple, and direct truth to all men; the next moment they heard Swamiji thundering to *them*: "Are you ashamed of God that you cannot confess His

truth before the world? Do you call that religious and spiritual? The priests are the only people fit for the truth! The masses are not fit for it! . . . It must be diluted! Water it down a little! . . . But the people shall learn the truth. . . . Bring truth out! If it is real, it will do good. When people protest and propose other methods, they only make apologies for witchcraft.”¹¹ Many are such instances in which Buddha and Swamiji played, as it were, contrapuntal themes. But if they were alike in their direct, unequivocal approach to truth, alike in their boundless desire to free *all* men from delusion and slavery, alike in their insistence on self-reliance, the difference between their basic teachings was enormous—both philosophically and practically.

According to Miss Ansell’s transcript, Swamiji did not say in this lecture, as he is quoted in the *Chronicle* report, that the Hindus interpret Buddha to have meant something he did not teach. Rather, he opposed Buddha’s negative teaching of no God, no soul or self, with the positive teaching of monistic Vedanta. “There is another way of looking at the truth we have been discussing,” he said: “the Hindu way. We claim that Buddha’s great doctrine of selflessness can be better understood if it is looked at in our way. In the Upanishads there are [is?] already the great doctrine of the Atman and the Brahman.” And then Swamiji spoke of that grand Upanishadic teaching: “There is one Self, not many. That one Self shines in various forms. Man is man’s brother because all men are one. A man is not only my brother, say the Vedas, he is myself. Hurting any part of the universe, I only hurt myself. I am the universe. It is a delusion that I think I am Mr. So-and-so—that is the delusion. . . . It is the delusion of separateness that is the root of misery. . . . When Buddha says there is no soul, I say, ‘Man, thou art one with the universe; thou art all things.’ How positive!”¹²

It was this positive, monistic truth that Swamiji gave to all men. He gave it in full measure, because man (whom in this lecture he called in unforgettably incisive words “the other God—man”) was himself that truth in full measure. Buddha asked all men, indiscriminately, to leave the world; Swamiji

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

asked them to spiritualize the world, to know it and themselves as divine. But in each teaching man stood supreme in the universe, possessing the means of his own salvation, with no cause either to beg for help or to weep. In northern California, as we shall see, Swamiji was to lay greater and greater emphasis on the total self-sufficiency of man—the other God—in whose service he himself, like Buddha, would willingly, and paradoxically, sacrifice his life a thousand times.

10

On the same Sunday that Swamiji delivered his lecture on Buddha, two interviews with him appeared in the San Francisco papers—one in the *Chronicle*, the other in the *Examiner*. It is possible that these were two different versions of the same morning session, yet this is not certain, and Swamiji may have received the reporters on separate days, giving a good deal of time to each.

The reporter from the *Chronicle* was an imaginative young woman named Blanche Partington. In August of this same year she was to visit Shanti Ashrama—the Vedanta Retreat in the San Antonio Valley, of which Swami Turiyananda was then in charge—and was to write up her visit for her newspaper. Miss Partington was clearly impressed with Swamiji, and it is interesting to note that later on in her life she was to become a Christian Science practitioner (or healer), devoting herself, if not to Vedanta, to the belief that man is Spirit. The story of her morning visit to the Turk Street flat (which was published in the *Chronicle* of March 18 and first reprinted in *Prabuddha Bharata* of June 1929) read as follows:

A DUSKY PHILOSOPHER FROM INDIA

Had I been a little wiser or a little less wise—a little knowledge is a dangerous thing—it is possible that my prevailing sensation on meeting the Hindoo monk, Swami Vivekananda, would have been other than an irresistible

inclination to get behind something or somebody for fear of my aura telling unkind tales of me.

These Eastern seers are such strange folk, and our auras we have always with us. That mine was radiating curiosity and "nerves" and other undesirable original sins in every direction, I was painfully aware, but either the Swami, through knowledge, has come to charity, or else he is as comfortably unconscious of auras as the rest of us, for his greeting was gracious and kind as might be. Bowing very low, in Eastern fashion, on his entrance to the room, then holding out his hand in good American style, the dusky philosopher from the banks of the Ganges gave friendly greeting to the representative of that thoroughly Occidental institution, the daily press.

I couldn't see much of him at first, for his eyes, which are very large and brilliant, and black, of course, but I found afterward that he was taller than common, of much dignified grace of movement, and of a color calculated to make artists of fish wives. It made me dream of "heathen idols, the temple bells a-ringing", of splendid mosques and bazaars, gold and ivory, bejeweled rajahs and elephants, and the whole gorgeous confusion of color which does duty for the foreigner's conception of that ancient rich land of India. And the Swami himself—a Buddha come to judgment! It is exactly the type. When he is not smiling, and the Swami is a humorous soul, there is the same suggestion of eternal inscrutableness in his face, the same suggestion of immutable poise in his figure. The repose of the Vere de Vere is not in it. ["Her manners had not that repose," Tennyson wrote, "which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere."] One might, indeed, suggest that the quickest way of learning to be English would be to study manners in India! An undoubted addition to the Swami's striking picturesqueness is the wonderful red robe he wears. One cannot accuse a Swami of studying his complexion, yet the effect is identically the same as if the question had

been studied with the utmost nicety, and I can confidently recommend a certain "persimmonish" terra cotta to the advanced brunette—what price for the hint, ladies? Perhaps the Swami Vivekananda is not without the very smallest spice of the universal vanity. I asked for a picture to illustrate this article, and when someone handed me a certain "cut" which has been extensively used in lecture advertisements here he uttered a mild protest against its use.

"But that does not look like you," said I.

"No, it is as if I wished to kill someone," he said smiling, "like—like—"

"Othello," I inserted rashly. But the little audience of friends only smiled as the Swami made laughing recognition of the absurd resemblance of the picture to the jealous Moor. But I do not use that picture.

"Is it true, Swami," I asked, "that, when you went home after lecturing in the Congress of Religions after the World's Fair, princes knelt at your feet, and a half dozen of the ruling sovereigns of India dragged your carriage through the streets, as the papers told us? We do not treat our priests so."

"That is not good to talk of," said the Swami. "But it is true that religion rules there, not dollars."

"What about caste?"

"What of your Four Hundred?" he replied, smiling. "Caste in India is an institution hardly explicable or intelligible to the Occidental mind. It is acknowledged to be an imperfect institution, but we do not recognize a superior social result from your attempts at class distinction. India is the only country which has so far succeeded in imposing a permanent caste upon her people, and we doubt if an exchange for Western superstitions and evils would be for her advantage."

"But under such regime—where a man may not eat this nor drink that, nor marry the other—the freedom you teach would be impossible," I ventured.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

"It is impossible," assented the Swami; "but until India has outgrown the necessity for caste laws, caste laws will remain."

"Is it true that you may not eat food cooked by a foreigner—unbeliever?" I asked.

"In India the cook—who is not called a servant—must be of the same or higher caste than those for whom the food is cooked, as it is considered that whatever a man touches is impressed by his personality, and food, with which a man builds up the body through which he expresses himself, is regarded as being liable to such impression. As to the foods we eat, it is assumed that certain kinds of food nourish certain properties worthy of cultivation, and that others retard our spiritual growth. For instance, we do not kill to eat. Such food would be held to nourish the animal body, at the expense of the spiritual body, in which the soul is said to be clothed on its departure from this physical envelope, besides laying the sin of bloodguiltiness upon the butcher."

"Ugh!" I exclaimed involuntarily, an awful vision of reproachful little lambs, little chicken ghosts, hovering cow spirits—I was always afraid of cows anyway—rising up before me.

"You see," explained the Brahmin, "the universe is all one, from the lowest insect to the highest Yogi. It is all one, we are all one, you and I are one—" Here the Occidental audience smiled, the unconscious monk chanting the oneness of things in Sanscrit and the consequent sin of taking any life.

It is weird and beautiful, like far-off echoes of some ancient oracle, to hear the deep and musical chant of Sanscrit scriptures, in which to vary the intoning of one syllable is a deadly sin. It falls from the monk's lips as dear and lovely poetry rises from a Western heart, and chant and translation, chant and translation, ring out their alternate music and truth through all his talk and

teaching. He was pacing up and down the room most of the time during our talk, occasionally standing over the register—it was a chill morning for this child of the sun—and doing with grace and freedom whatever occurred to him, even, at length, smoking a little.

“You, yourself, have not yet attained supreme control over all desires,” I ventured. The Swami’s frankness is infectious.

“No, madam,” and he smiled the broad and brilliant smile of a child; “Do I look it?” But the Swami, from the land of *hasheesh* and dreams, doubtless did not connect my query with its smoky origin.

“Is it usual among the Hindoo priesthood to marry?” I ventured again.

“It is a matter of individual choice,” replied this member of the Hindoo priesthood. “One does not marry that he may not be in slavery to a woman and children, or permit the slavery of a woman to him.”

“But what is to become of the population?” urged the Anti-Malthusian.

“Are you so glad to have been born?” retorted the Eastern thinker, his large eyes flashing scorn. “Can you conceive of nothing higher than this warring, hungry, ignorant world? Do not fear that the *you* may be lost, though the sordid, miserable consciousness of the now may go. What worth having [would be] gone?”

“The child comes crying into the world. Well may he cry! Why should we weep to leave it? Have you thought—” here the sunny smile came back—“of the different modes of East and West of expressing the passing away? We say of the dead man, ‘He gave up his body;’ you put it, ‘he gave up the ghost’. How can that be? Is it the dead body that permits the ghost to depart? What curious inversion of thought!”

“But, on the whole, Swami, you think it better to be

comfortably dead than to be a living lion?" persisted the defender of populations.

"Svaha, Svaha, so be it!" shouted the monk.

"But how is it that under such philosophy men consent to live at all?"

"Because a man's own life is sacred as any other life, and one may not leave chapters unlearned," returned the philosopher. "Add power and diminish time, and the school days are shorter; as the learned professor can make the marble in twelve years which nature took centuries to form. It is all a question of time."

"India, which has had this teaching so long, has not yet learned her lesson?"

"No, though she is perhaps nearer than any other country, in that she has learned to love mercy."

"What of England in India?" I asked.

"But for English rule I could not be here now," said the monk, "though your lowest free-born American negro holds higher position in India politically than is mine. Brahmin and coolie, we are all 'natives'. But it is all right, in spite of the misunderstanding and oppression. England is the Tharma [karma?] of India, attracted inevitably by some inherent weakness, past mistakes, but from her blood and fibre will come the new national hope for my countrymen. I am a loyal subject of the Empress of India!" and here the Swami salaamed before an imaginary potentate, bowing very low, perhaps too low for reverence.

"But such an apostle of freedom—" I murmured.

"She is a widow for many years, and such we hold of high worth in India," said the philosopher seriously. "As to freedom, yes, I believe the goal of all development is freedom, law and order. There is more law and order in the grave than anywhere else—try it."

"I must go," I said, "I have to catch a train."

"That is like all Americans," smiled the Swami, and I had a glimpse of all eternity in his utter restfulness. "You

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

must catch this car or that train always. Is there not another, later?"

But I did not attempt to explain the Occidental conception of the value of time to this child of the Orient, realizing its utter hopelessness and my own renegade sympathy. It must be delightful beyond measure to live in the land of "time enough". In the Orient there seems time to breathe, time to think, time to live; as the Swami says, what have we in exchange? We live in time; they in eternity.

One does not like to spoil Miss Partington's joke, but it is not likely that Swamiji recommended the grave to her, or that he had said that the goal of all development was "freedom, law and order." More probably he had said it was "freedom, *not* law and order." However, the reader will judge this for himself.

As for the picture of Swamiji which Miss Partington likened to Othello, it may have been one of those taken during the Parliament of Religions in 1893, showing him standing with his arms folded and looking like the heroic warrior-monk that he was. The photograph which she chose to accompany her article was in another mood entirely. Here Swamiji is seated in his robe and turban, his right elbow rests on the arm of his settee, he leans slightly to the right, his head supported by his hand. This picture was one of several taken professionally in San Francisco, perhaps at Mrs. Hansbrough's urging and certainly before March 17. Two sets of photographs had been taken at the same studio. In one set, Swamiji wears his robe and turban; in the other, which shows him seated in an ornately carved chair, his head is bare, he wears his clerical collar and loose black coat. In all these photographs, he seems piercingly beautiful, the embodiment—almost translucently so—of grace in every meaning of the word. The reader is perhaps familiar with these pictures, for they have been reproduced more than once (most recently,

I believe, in *Vivekananda, A Biography in Pictures*) ; but reproductions made from reproductions become progressively undefined. Attempts, therefore, have been made in San Francisco to recover the original negatives; but this to no avail, and it would seem certain that they were destroyed by the Fire and Earthquake of 1906. Fortunately, however, the Vedanta Society of Northern California possesses some of the original prints and has given permission to reproduce them in the pages of this book. The two sets are the only pictures we have of Swamiji in San Francisco, and as Miss Partington has let us know, it is these photographs, not earlier ones, which show us how he was when he was here, how he looked when he lectured, when he talked to friends and interviewers, when he walked these streets.

The *Examiner's* interview with Swamiji came out in the Magazine Section of that paper on the same Sunday as the *Chronicle's*. It carried no by-line, but whoever wrote it seems to have been as charmed by him as was Miss Partington. One wishes that he or she had been less sparing of words, but we have at least something of what Swamiji said as he paced for "a couple of hours" about the front parlor of his flat. The opening paragraph was taken from the preface of a pamphlet printed at Harvard in March of 1896. As for the headlines, they are justified, in part at least, by the material which directly followed the interview. There was no accompanying photograph; instead, an imaginative line drawing depicted Swamiji standing (in India) amid a circle of bearded disciples. The effect was meant to be, and no doubt struck many readers as being, exotic, weird, and strange. The text read:

**"WE ARE HYPNOTIZED INTO WEAKNESS BY
OUR SURROUNDINGS"**

Hindoo Philosopher

Who Strikes at the Root of Some Occidental
Evils and Tells How

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

We must Worship God Simply and Not with
Many Vain Prayers.

"The Swami Vivekananda has created a high degree of interest here in himself and his work," said C. C. Everett, D.D., LL.D., of Harvard University, in speaking of the work of the Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions held at the World's Fair in Chicago. "There are, indeed, few departments of study more attractive than the Hindoo thought.... We Occidentals busy ourselves with the manifold. We can, however have no understanding of the manifold if we have no sense of the One in Whom the manifold exists. The reality of the One is the truth which the East may well teach us, and we owe a debt of gratitude to Vivekananda that he has taught this lesson so effectively."

The Swami is among us now, and we, too, may hear this "truth" if we will. He must preach for his devotees, the strange, old gospels of the East.

A strikingly picturesque figure, the Swami Vivekananda is certain to attract sympathetic and unusual attention. Deeply learned in Sanscrit lore, familiar with all the phases of contemporary life, thoroughly versed in world-history, his friends are found in all classes and countries.

One American friend he may be assured of - the Swami is a charming person to interview.

Pacing about the little room where he is staying, he kept the small audience of interviewer and friend entertained for a couple of hours.

"Tell you about the English in India? But I do not wish to talk of politics," he said. "But from the higher standpoint, it is true that but for the English rule I could not be here. We natives know that it is through the intermixture of English blood and ideas that the salvation of India will come. Fifty years ago, all the literature and religion of the race were locked up in the Sanscrit

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

language; today the drama and the novel are written in the vernacular, and the literature of religion is being translated. That is the work of the English, and it is unnecessary, in America, to descant upon the value of the education of the masses."

"What do you think of the Boer War?" was asked.

"Oh! Have you seen the morning paper?" the monk inquired. "But I do not wish to discuss politics. English and Boers are both in the wrong. It is terrible—terrible—the bloodshed! English will conquer, but at what fearful cost! She seems the nation of Fate."

And the Swami, with a smile, began chanting the Sanscrit for an unwillingness to discuss politics.

Then he talked long of ancient Russian history, and of the wandering tribes of Tartary, and of the Moorish rule in Spain, and displaying an astonishing memory and research. To this childlike interest in all things that touch him is doubtless due much of the curious and universal knowledge that he seems to possess.

The above was followed without explanation by a fairly long article headed simply "By Swami Vivekananda." This portion of the newspaper text has been reprinted in volume eight of the *Complete Works* under the title "The Essence of Religion" and with the notation "Report of a lecture delivered in America." Just what lecture this was, it is hard to say. It seems to contain excerpts from much earlier lectures and classes, and could have been compiled, in part at least, from Swamiji's books and pamphlets. It does not, in any case, seem to be a report of any of his known San Francisco or Oakland lectures given prior to March 18. There is, of course, always the possibility, indeed the probability, that Swamiji gave lectures or talks in the Bay Area of which we know nothing, and "The Essence of Religion" could have been the notes taken at such a lecture. But since it is not at all certain that this is so, we must leave the matter here as an unsolved puzzle.

Swamiji's lecture of Sunday, March 25, 1900, at Union Square Hall was to have been on "Sri Khrisna and His Message"—so it was advertised (with that spelling) in all the papers, together with the additional information that the lecture would start at 3:00 p.m. and that a Mr. Hugo Hertzner would sing the offertory. Mr. Hertzner may have sung the offertory, but otherwise little took place as announced.

"At 3 p.m.," Mr. Allan wrote in his memoirs, "Swami was not there. We waited and wondered what to do, and concluded that we must just wait." But Mr. Allan, who acted now as head usher at all of Swamiji's lectures, did not just wait. He walked from the hall to the corner of Post and Powell streets, looked up and down Powell Street, waited awhile, saw no sign of Swamiji, and returned to the hall. This he did several times. It was probably not until his fourth or fifth trip to the corner that he saw Swamiji walking slowly up Powell Street in his own composed and majestic rhythm. The time was then three-thirty. But Mr. Allan's difficulties were not over. "I met him at the corner of Post Street," he continued in his memoirs, "and walked with him towards the Hall." (According to Mr. Brown, who had often heard the story from Mr. Allan, the latter had said, "Swami, don't you know you're late? The audience has been waiting." To which Swamiji had replied, "Mr. Allan, I am never late. I have all the time in the world. All time is mine." "Well, Swami," Mr. Allan said, "the audience may not feel the same as you do." But Swamiji just went on at his same leisurely pace.)¹ "On the way we had to pass a shoe-shine stand," Mr. Allan's memoirs continue, "and when Swami saw that, and saw that the shoe-shiner was idle, he decided to have his shoes shined. Did I not silently fidget, remembering the people who had come to hear the lecture! But all my fidgeting did no good. Well, at last, Swami got on the platform and was introduced to that audience, which had more or less patiently waited for him."²

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

It is not likely that Mr. Allan, fidgeting at the shoe-shine stand, had had "a glimpse of all eternity" in the Swami's "utter restfulness" as had Miss Partington; but in a few minutes he was to become almost overpoweringly aware of the vastness of Swamiji's being. "It was when I introduced him at that lecture," he wrote, "that I felt like a pigmy and saw him as an immense giant. After this experience I could not bring myself to stand beside him again, but always thereafter made my introduction from the foot of the platform."³

For one reason or another, Swamiji decided to speak that day not on Sri Krishna's message to the world, as had been announced, but on Mohammed's. Whether he was asked from the audience to make this change (as Mr. Allan indicated in his memoirs) or whether Swamiji himself felt that Mohammed's message should be spoken of before that of Sri Krishna (as the first paragraph of Miss Ansell's transcript implies) is not at all certain. But whatever the reason for the change of subject, Swamiji spoke of Mohammed without preparation, and, to Mr. Allan's amazement, "proceeded to give the dates of all the main points referred to." "After it was over," Mr. Allan wrote, "I remarked to him about his good memory, to which he replied, 'No, Mr. Allan, in my country I do not have a good memory. You know Macaulay's *History of England*? I had to read it through three times before I could repeat it word for word; my mother could memorize any sacred book in only one reading!' I was silent; but I wondered how many times any of us would have to read *The History of England* through to be able to repeat it all word for word!"⁴ (One might note here that not only did Swamiji remember every word he read, he was, and had always been, a voracious reader on all subjects. His fund of knowledge seems to have been endless. We have found him, for instance, speaking at length to the interviewer from the *Examiner* "of ancient Russian history, and of the wandering tribes of Tartary, and of the Moorish rule in Spain." But there was an element in his knowledge of something more than a prodigious intellect. His

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

mind was open, as it were, to the source of knowledge itself. "He once told us," Mr. Allan recounted, "that he had such faith in the Divine Mother that if he had to speak on a subject that he knew absolutely nothing about, he would get on his feet, for he knew that Mother would put the words into his mouth.")⁶

The published portion of Miss Ansell's second transcript of "Mohammed's Message to the World," or more simply, "Mohammed" (*Complete Works*, volume one), gives no idea of what had so amazed Mr. Allan, for it comprises only the latter half of the lecture. After his opening sentences, Swamiji had actually given a long historical background, setting the world scene upon which Mohammed had appeared. Miss Ansell's notes of this portion, which she included in her first transcript of 1945, run to seventy-four typewritten lines. These are interspersed with many small and large gaps that represent unrecorded passages, and are interrupted three times by notations that indicate Swamiji told a story.

These notes are "scrappy" indeed. However, scattered throughout this first half of the transcript are a few complete sentences and paragraphs which are in themselves of much interest. Out of context, they give no conception of the broad panorama of history Swamiji was unfolding before his audience, but they should, one thinks, be rescued for themselves alone. Thus I shall present them here. Except for a bracketed guess here and there as to a word or a meaning, I give them as Miss Ansell took them down.

After stating that he would "take Mohammed and bring out the particular work of the great Arabian prophet," Swamiji went on to say:

Each great messenger not only creates a new order of things, but is himself the creation of a certain order of things. There is no such thing as an independent, active cause. All causes are cause and effect in turn. Father is father and son in turn. Mother is mother and daughter

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in turn. It is necessary to understand the surroundings and circumstances into which they [the great messengers] come.

He then launched into his lengthy historical discussion, from which the following disconnected excerpts have been rescued:⁸

This is the peculiarity of civilization. One wave of a race will go from its birthplace to a distant land and make a wonderful civilization. The rest will be left in barbarism. The Hindus came into India and the tribes of Central Asia were left in barbarism. Others came to Asia Minor and Europe. Then, you remember the coming out of Egypt of the Israelites. Their home was the Arabian desert. Out of that springs a new work. . . . All civilizations grow that way. A certain race becomes civilized. Then comes a nomad race. Nomads are always ready to fight. They come and conquer a race. They bring better blood, stronger physiques. They take up the mind of the conquered race and add that to their body and push civilization still further. One race becomes cultured and civilized until the body is worn out. Then, like a whirlwind comes a race strong in the physical, and they take up the arts and the sciences and the mind, and push civilization further. This must be. Otherwise the world would not be.

* * *

The moment a great man rises, they build a beautiful [mythology] around him. Science and truth is all the religion that exists. Truth is more beautiful than any mythology in the world. . . .

The old Greeks had disappeared already, the whole nation [lay] under the feet of the Romans who were learning their science and art. The Roman was a barbarian, a conquering man. He had no eye for poetry or art. He knew how to rule and how to get everything

centralized into that system of Rome and to enjoy that. That was sweet. And that Roman Empire is gone, destroyed by all sorts of difficulties, luxury, a new foreign religion, and all that. Christianity had been already six hundred years in the Roman Empire....

Whenever a new religion tries to force itself upon another race, it succeeds if the race is uncultured. If it [the race] is cultured, it will destroy the [religion].... The Roman Empire was a case in point and the Persian people saw that. Christianity was another thing with the barbarians in the north. [But] the Christianity of the Roman Empire was a mixture of everything, something from Persia, from the Jews, from India, from Greece, everything.

* * *

The race is always killed by [war]. War takes away the best men, gets them killed, and the cowards are left at home. Thus comes the degeneration of the race.... Men became small. Why? All the great men became [warriors]. That is how war kills races, takes their best into the battle-fields. Then the monasteries. They all went to the desert, to the caves for meditation. The monasteries gradually became the centers of wealth and luxury....

The Anglo-Saxon race would not be Anglo-Saxon but for these monasteries. Every weak man was worse than a slave.... In that state of chaos these monasteries were centers of light and protection.

* * *

Where [cultures] differ very much they do not quarrel. All these warring, jarring elements [were originally] all one.

"In the midst of all this chaos was born the prophet." Thus Swamiji concluded the first part of his lecture, of which the above extracts are mere bits and pieces. He then spoke of Mohammed's preaching the simplest of religions in a confused and degenerate age: "God is God. There is no philosophy, no

complicated code of ethics. 'Our God is one without a second, and Mohammed is the Prophet.' . . . Mohammedanism deluged the world in the name of the Lord. The tremendous conquering power!" "[Mohammedanism]," he went on to say, "came as a message to the masses."⁷ In Miss Ansell's first typed transcript an interesting sentence follows here (represented by dots in the *Complete Works*), which reads: "In all the great religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Mohammedanism—their success depends not upon the philosophy they preach, not upon the ethics, not upon the religion, for the vast mass of mankind have no religion yet."⁸ Following this sentence there is an unfortunate gap in the transcript; but it is clear that Swamiji's meaning was that Islam's doctrine of equality, whereby all Mohammedans were *in practice* brothers, made for its great appeal and strength. "The first message," he said, "was equality. . . . There is one religion—love. No more question of race, color, [or] anything else. Join it! That practical [e]quality carried the day."⁹ Indeed to Swamiji, the practical (not merely theoretical) equality of Islam—constituted its essential and distinguishing message to the world.

But from the standpoint of Swamiji's own message, the most important part of his lecture on Mohammed lay in the glowing and provocative words toward its close: "These old people," he said (I quote from the version in *Vedanta and the West*), "were all messengers of God. I fall down and worship them; I take the dust of their feet. But they are dead, dead as door-nails!¹⁰ And we are alive. We must go ahead! Religion is not following Jesus or Mohammed. Even if an imitation is good, it is never genuine. Be not an imitation of Jesus, but be Jesus! You are quite as great as Jesus, Buddha, or anybody else. If we are not, we must struggle and be. . . . The greatest religion is to be true to your own nature. Have faith in yourselves!"¹¹

the appointed hour of three o'clock, Swamiji spoke on "Krishna's Message to the World." In many respects this was a much more important lecture than that on Mohammed, and we can be glad he postponed it for a week. By the time he gave it (the date was April 1), Ida Ansell seems to have become more adept at following him with her shorthand, and it has come down to us, it would appear, with much of its original beauty and power intact. The first typed transcript of "Krishna" has indeed so few gaps, "scrappy" parts, and obscure passages that the second transcript does not substantially differ from it. One short and clear passage, however, was omitted from the second transcript, and because it was one of Swamiji's swift darts, thrown at his audience in his inimitable manner, it should, I think, be given here. In speaking of Sri Krishna's great tolerance toward all forms of religious practice and expression—each a link in the chain that stretches out from the common center—he said, as if in quick and scathing reply to some unspoken judgment of the religious ways of others: "Every one of us has got the charter from God Almighty! He is dead and gone. We have buried Him. And He has given the world to you and me to look after! I am very busy about everybody else except myself!"¹ Another sentence that is missing from the second transcript is as typical in its way of Swamiji's manner of lecturing as the above. It contained only three words. After saying, "... Krishna has no condemnation for anything. It is better to do something than to stand still. The man who begins to worship God [for material gain] will grow by degrees and begin to love God for love's sake," Swamiji added, "Bless you all."²

He spoke in this lecture not only of Sri Krishna's harmonization of different religious ideas ("His was the first heart that was large enough to see truth in all, his the first lips that uttered beautiful words for each and all"),³ he spoke also of Krishna's doctrine of work without attachment, of karma yoga, and into this he wove his own teaching:

"It is blasphemy to think that you can help anyone. First

root out this idea of helping, and then go to worship. . . . Serve the living God! God comes to you in the blind, in the halt, in the poor, in the weak, in the diabolical. What a glorious chance for you to worship! The moment you think you are 'helping', you undo the whole thing and degrade yourself. Knowing this, work. . . . Then work is no more slavery. It becomes a play, and joy itself. Work! Be unattached! That is the whole secret. If you get attached, you become miserable. . . . We do a little work and break ourselves. Why? We become attached to that work. If we do not become attached, side by side with it we have infinite rest. . . .

"How hard it is to arrive at this sort of nonattachment!" Swamiji continued. "Therefore Krishna shows us the lower ways and methods. The easiest way for everyone is to do his or her work and not take the results. It is our desire that binds us. . . . If you are strong, take up the Vedanta philosophy and be independent. If you cannot do that, worship God; if not, worship some image. If you lack strength even to do that, do some good works without the idea of gain. Offer everything you have unto the service of the Lord. Fight on!"⁴ (But to do any justice to this lecture one would have to quote the full transcript, and this to no purpose, for the reader who has not read it will find it in volume one of the *Complete Works*.)

On April 8, Swamiji gave his concluding lecture in his Sunday series. Its title was "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?" But of this we shall speak later, for it was the culmination not only of the Sunday series but also of many of his other San Francisco lectures. Moreover, it was not a lecture on a great Messenger of the past, as had been those of the four previous Sundays. It was, rather, a message given directly to this age by a living messenger—one who spoke with as intense a faith in his mission and in himself as had his predecessors, whose every word, like theirs, burst like a bombshell, and who, with the same indifference to fame as was theirs, cared not at all whether one man in the world remembered him for himself or not.

In none of the various reminiscences available to us did anyone mention the date on which Swamiji started holding classes at his Turk Street flat; nor in his known letters did he. We can guess, however, that shortly after he had a place of his own the requests for practical instruction became many and insistent. As we have noted earlier, he probably moved into the flat on March 8, 1900. Since this was a Thursday, it is not likely that classes were started that week. It is more than likely, however, that they were started the next, particularly since Swamiji was by then (as will be seen later) giving a series of three evening lectures at the Red Men's Building, entitled collectively "Applied Psychology." Although we have a record only of the last of these lectures, there can be very little doubt that all three dealt in general with the science of raja yoga, a subject that must have at once increased the "imperative demand for personal instruction," which demand, Mr. Frank Rhodehamel has told us, "gave rise to class work."¹ But however that may be, Swamiji's classes, once started, were held regularly through March and the first week of April.

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, the classes were held three times a week, but it is possible that she was referring only to the morning classes. That Swamiji held at least a few afternoon classes as well is almost certain. Many years later Miss Ansell, consulting her diary for 1900, told Mr. Allan that she began the morning class on March 26 and that on March 29 she "was invited to join the first class."² One may gather from this that Swamiji held two sets of classes—one for beginners and one for more advanced students. As will be seen later on, there is evidence that the advanced class was held in the afternoon.

In regard to the morning class, Mrs. Hansbrough tells us that it began, or was scheduled to begin, at ten-thirty. (How long the class might last on any given day no one knew. "There was no set time for their close," Mrs. Allan once recalled. "They lasted from one hour to two and a half hours. But there

was no time in his presence—the hours fled.”)³ Between thirty and forty people attended, climbing the stairs to the third floor, backtracking along the narrow passage, and crowding into the front parlor. There were, of course, not enough chairs to accommodate everyone, and several people—men and women alike—sat on the carpeted floor.⁴ Swamiji would enter from his bedroom, sometimes at ten-thirty, sometimes later; for more often than not he had been giving a private interview in the dining room, oblivious of time.

Mr. Frank Rhodehamel, whose first interview took place one morning before a class, has given us a vivid picture of Swamiji’s swift passage from dining room to front parlor. “His personal appearance on my first interview,” he wrote, “was a pleasurable shock from which I have never fully recovered. He had on a long grey dressing gown [perhaps the same worn black and white herringbone tweed of Pasadena days] and was sitting cross-legged on a chair, smoking a pipe, his long hair falling in wild disarray over his features. . . . This interview was continued fifteen minutes beyond the time set for a class on Raja Yoga to be held in the front room of the house. We were interrupted by the lady in charge of affairs [undoubtedly Mrs. Hansbrough] rushing into the room and exclaiming, ‘Why, Swami! You have forgotten all about the Yoga class. It is fifteen minutes past time now, and the room is full of people.’ The Swami arose hastily to his feet, exclaiming to me, ‘Oh, excuse me! We will now go to the front room.’ I walked through the hall to the front room. He went through his bedroom, which was between the room we had been sitting in and the front room. Before I was seated he emerged from his room with his hair. . . . neatly combed, and attired in his Sannyasin robe! Not more than one minute had elapsed from the time he started from his room with dishevelled hair and in lounging attire, till he came leisurely out into the front room ready to lecture. Speed and precision of action were evidently at his command.”⁵

If the front parlor became too crowded, the sliding doors leading to Swamiji’s bedroom would be opened and further

adjustments made in the seating arrangements. Then Swamiji would take his place on the sofa, and the class would begin. And here again, we can turn to Frank Rhodehamel for a picture.

(Mr. Rhodehamel's memoirs are, incidentally, the longest and perhaps the most important among those that pertain to Swamiji's life and work in northern California. They first appeared anonymously in an Appendix to the 1913 edition of the *Life* and in later editions were incorporated into the body of the text, where they form several pages of the chapter "Second Visit to America." Mr. Rhodehamel and his wife were living in Oakland at the time of Swamiji's visit and had evidently first heard him lecture at the Unitarian church. Thenceforth, like many others, they attended every talk of his they could, no matter on which side of the Bay it was given. Both husband and wife—and Mrs. Rhodehamel's sister, Charlotte Brown, as well—remained students of Vedanta throughout the remainder of their lives, studying under Swami Turiyananda during his stay in California and, as we have seen, becoming members of the small, informal group in Oakland of which Gurudasa was the leader. Later on, Mr. Rhodehamel added to his memoirs with two articles—"Vedanta in California: Memories" and "Shanti Ashrama Days"—published, again anonymously, in *Prabuddha Bharata* of, respectively, February-March 1916 and May 1918. It is through the first of these that we see the half awe-inspiring, half informal beginning of one of Swamiji's classes.)

"Again we are seated in the class about him," Mr. Rhodehamel recalled, seeing the scene in his mind's eye as he wrote. "He is the orange-robed, the illuminated one, seated on the divan. His great dark eyes searching the faces about him reveal no clew as to his findings. A few words of instruction as to posture, breathing, relaxation, etc. follow, though without rigid conformity to the traditional teachings. His idea is apparently to make everyone feel at ease as if he would have the spirit of contemplation steal upon us unawares.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

“Two students, a man and a woman, squat on the floor in painful imitation of the Swami’s posture. He looks at them a moment then looks at the rest and laughs. ‘You can’t sit that way,’ he says. ‘Your legs are not trained to sit that way. In India we are trained to sit that way from babyhood, but you can’t do it.’ Neither move. The woman replies, pressing her knees down, ‘Oh, this is easy for me. I am used to it. I always sit this way.’ The man laughs and hangs his head. Swami looks from one to the other and laughs again. ‘Come,’ he says, speaking to the man, ‘sit here beside me and let your feet rest on the floor.’ He is stubborn. ‘Come, come,’ he pleads, patting the divan beside him, ‘come sit here by me. You can’t meditate that way.’ But it is useless. Both remain on the floor. Swami laughs and abandons his efforts. Everyone laughs. ‘All that is necessary,’ he continues, ‘is to sit comfortably with the body erect—that is all. Try to think of the body as luminous, full of light.’”⁶

Concerning the Western difficulty with cross-legged sitting, Mrs. Hansbrough told a similar story, which could have been another version of the same incident or, more probably, an account of a different one. “There was a Mr. Wiseman who came to the classes,” she related. “He was a devoted follower of Miss Lydia Bell. He came late once to the class, when all the seats were taken and he had to sit on the floor. In those days the style of men’s trousers did not provide the generous leg-room they do nowadays [1941], and Mr. Wiseman’s trousers were so tight he could not sit cross-legged. Swamiji noticed him sitting with his knees up under his chin and suddenly exclaimed, ‘Don’t look like a fool; come and sit by me!’ Mr. Wiseman was a quiet, unassuming sort of man or he would have felt it presumptuous to sit on the same couch with Swamiji. But he accepted the invitation and took a seat on the end of the couch.”⁷

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, the classes began (once everyone was settled) with a meditation period that lasted from fifteen minutes to half an hour. Miss Ansell, too, recalled that

meditation came first and was followed by a period of instruction, which, in turn, was followed by "questions and answers and practical suggestions as to exercise, rest and diet."⁸ Mr. Rhodehamel, on the other hand, tells us that the meditation period took place after the class for "such of the audience as remained for that purpose." But whether the meditation came at the beginning of the class or at its end, to meditate with Swamiji was an experience never forgotten. The period began with his chanting. "The rhythmic intonation of Sanskrit Mantras stirs responsive chords," Mr. Rhodehamel recalled, still reliving those wonderful days as he wrote. "The result is emotional rather than intellectual. An intangible sweetness steals upon the senses, quieting them, and the mind reflects somewhat of that placid depth which is the Swami's habitual state. Now he pauses to translate, weaving through the witchery of words an atmosphere of spiritual idealism. His personality becomes a magnet drawing one away from [oneself], and [one] feels as pleasurable those thought-flashes which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been resisted as inimical to personality. Something within leaps upward. Consciousness breaks through the incrustation of personal identity. One's life in the world fades into a mere tradition, unstable, unalluring. A transitional period of spiritual probation is covered in a flash. The present consciousness becomes contemporaneous with that wisdom which is ever unsullied by the succession of events."⁹

Perhaps not everyone responded to Swamiji's influence so sensitively or so consciously as did Mr. Rhodehamel; yet few seated before Swamiji in that classroom could have failed to receive something of his peace, to taste something of the depths of true meditation that ever afterward would beckon. "I throw my mind into the state of bliss," he once said during the course of a lecture in San Francisco, "and the tendency is to raise the same bliss in your mind."¹⁰ Even one not seated near Swamiji could partake of his meditation. One morning Mrs. Hansbrough was too occupied in the kitchen to attend the class. "I used to prepare a lamb broth for Swamiji every day,"

she related. "I would cook it for three or four hours, and it was very nourishing because every bit of the food value would be cooked out of the meat. One day for some reason I had not been able to get the broth made by...ten-thirty. Swamiji looked into the kitchen before going to the class. 'Aren't you coming?' he asked. I told him that because I had neglected to plan my work properly, now I had to stay in the kitchen. 'Well, that's all right,' he said, 'I will meditate for you.' All through the class I felt he really was meditating for me. And do you know, I have always had the feeling that he still does meditate for me."¹¹

On another occasion, which I shall tell of here although it did not occur at Turk Street, Mrs. Hansbrough felt the strong effect of Swamiji's meditation. "In Alameda," she recalled, "I was upset or depressed about something and he said to me, 'Come, sit down and we will meditate.' 'Oh, I never meditate, Swamiji,' I told him. 'Well, come and sit by me, and I will meditate,' he replied. So I sat down and closed my eyes. In a moment I felt as though I were going to float away, and I quickly opened my eyes to look at Swamiji. He had the appearance of a statue, as though there were not a spark of life in his body. He must have meditated for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then opened his eyes again."¹² The sight of Swamiji meditating was in itself a profoundly moving experience. "Seated cross-legged on the divan [at Turk Street], clothed in his Sannyasin garb, with hands held one within the other on his lap, and with his eyes apparently closed, he might have been a statue in bronze, so immovable was he," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote years later in his memoirs. "A Yogi, indeed! Awake only to transcendental thought, he was the ideal, compelling veneration, love and devotion."¹³

Another account by one who attended a class of Swamiji's and who felt the power of his meditation is to be found in *Prabuddha Bharata* of March 1927. This reminiscence is in the form of a letter written by an unnamed member of the San Francisco Vedanta Society to the editor of the magazine and,

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

as will be seen, gives evidence that Swamiji held at least one afternoon class for advanced students at his Turk Street flat. The letter reads:

It was my good fortune to be in Los Angeles at a time when Swami Vivekananda was giving lectures there. Although the subjects on which he spoke were new to me at that time, I was fascinated by them, and when I returned to Oakland and Swami came later and lectured in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda, I was irresistibly attracted and was almost invariably one of his listeners.

On one occasion it was announced that on a certain afternoon the Swami would give a lecture to advanced students at his place of residence. As I was very desirous of attending, I applied to Swami's secretary [Mrs. Hansbrough] for permission to do so, at the same time telling her that I was not an advanced student. In answer I was given to understand that such being the case I would better not try to attend. Not satisfied, however, I applied to the Swami himself for permission to attend. He said most heartily, "Come, and welcome, welcome, welcome!"

The Swami's lecture was an intellectual and spiritual feast,—we seemed to be transported to higher regions of thought and feeling.

A part of the afternoon was given to answering questions, some of which were somewhat trivial, but the Swami always answered with unfailing courtesy.

The subject of diet was being discussed when a student asked, "Swami, what about eating onions?" "Well," answered Swami, "onions are not the best diet for a spiritual student, but how fond I was of them when I was a boy! I used to eat them and then walk up and down in the open air to get them from my breath."

The last half hour of the afternoon was devoted to meditation and the Swami became completely lost to the external world. His presence seemed to radiate a divine

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

influence which permeated our very being. We went home, our feet scarcely touching the ground. It seemed as if the Swami had given us to drink of the Divine Nectar.¹⁴

14

"After the period of meditation," Mrs. Hansbrough said, speaking of the morning classes, "Swamiji would discourse on some sacred book. Sometimes he would ask the class what they would like for a subject."¹ Unfortunately, she did not remember what sacred books Swamiji discoursed upon, or what he said. We know, however, that many of his classes were devoted to instruction in raja yoga. It was, indeed, these that Mr. Rhodehamel remembered best and these alone of which he spoke in his memoirs.

"The conditions, physical and mental, necessary to efficient contemplation of the significance of spiritual teachings were patiently dwelt upon in detail," he wrote in his 1916 *Prabuddha Bharata* article, and continued: "The difference between mere intellectual appreciation of spiritual ideals and the *desire to be spiritual* was sharply drawn. He taught that in the attainment of the spiritual capacity, or the desire to be spiritual, nothing is arbitrary; that the whole process is one of natural development. There was nothing mystical about it. Practice, practice, practice, life-long practice, and if necessary many lives of practice, was the one and only method to acquire the all-absorbing desire to be spiritual. And practice? Intensive contemplation of the significance of spiritual teachings and of the spiritual character. Hence the elimination of obstacles to deep contemplation and the employment of any accessories to that end was the scope of the Swami's efforts in his class-work."²

While the above quotation summarizes the scope and purpose of Swamiji's classes, more concrete is the glimpse Mr. Rhodehamel gives in his earlier memoirs published in the *Life*. Here one is brought closer, as it were, to Swamiji himself. "His talk was on Raja Yoga," Mr. Rhodehamel recalled, "and the

practical instruction simple breathing exercises. He said in part: 'You must learn to sit correctly; then to breathe correctly. This develops concentration; then comes meditation. . . . When practicing breathing, think of your body as luminous. . . . Try to look down the spinal cord from the base of the brain to the base of the spine. Imagine that you are looking through the hollow Sushumna to the Kundalini rising upward to the brain. . . . Have patience. Great patience is necessary.' Such as voiced doubts and fears he reassured by his, 'I am with you now. Try to have a little faith in me.' One was moved by his persuasive power when he said, 'We learn to meditate that we may be able to think of the Lord. Raja Yoga is only the means to that end. The great Patanjali, author of the Raja Yoga, never missed an opportunity to impress that idea upon his students. Now is the time for you who are young. Don't wait till you are old before you think of the Lord, for then you will not be able to think of Him. The power to think of the Lord is developed when you are young.' ”³

The above has the ring of Swamiji's voice; but we can come even closer to him than this and can hear some of the words he uttered during the classes at Turk Street even more distinctly. In volume eight of the *Complete Works* one will find a section entitled "Six Lessons on Raja Yoga." The original manuscript of these "Lessons" is actually not a manuscript at all, but a small, somewhat mysterious booklet which was discovered or, rather, found lying long-unnoticed in the Udbodhan Office (one of the Calcutta editorial offices of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission) in 1926. This work, a nicely printed, paper-bound booklet of thirty-one pages, bore no identifying information beyond the title "RajaYoga. Six Lessons by Swami Vivekananda," the words "Gift Edition," and the date "1913." Where and when Swamiji gave the lessons, where and by whom the booklet was printed, and when and how it came to the Udbodhan Office were all matters for conjecture. The most reasonable conjectures at the time were that the booklet was composed of notes taken down during Swamiji's classes at Mrs.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Bull's home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that they had been preserved by her, and that in 1913, some three years after her death, had been printed by her friends for private circulation. When "Six Lessons" were reprinted in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of 1928 a note to this effect accompanied them, and when in 1951 they were included in the *Complete Works* this note was retained.

In the meanwhile, however, another discovery was made which cast doubt on the supposed origin of the booklet. Sometime in the early 1930s a second copy was found among some old, long-untouched papers in the Vedanta Society's temple in San Francisco. This time the little volume yielded more information. It bore on its flyleaf the inscription in Swami Trigunatita's hand: "To Mr. C. F. French, With compliments from Hindu Temple, San Francisco, Calif. Per S. T. [Swami Trigunatita]." Mr. C. (Clinton) F. French was a member of the Vedanta Society in 1913 and a printer by profession. From the impersonal nature of the inscription it would appear that he had printed the booklet, had presented a number of copies to the Vedanta Society, and had, in turn, been presented with a copy by the Society, or the "Hindu Temple," as it was generally called in those days. Now, if Mr. French did indeed print the booklet, then it would seem certain that "Six Lessons" did not consist of Swāmiji's class talks at Mrs. Bull's house or, for that matter, of any of his class talks other than those given in San Francisco; for it is not probable that Mr. French would have had access to, or the rights to, any other manuscript. But while the inscription gave rise to a strong belief that Mr. French had printed the booklet, it did not constitute positive evidence.

It was not until recently that further detective work regarding "Six Lessons" was undertaken. One thing about the booklet is distinctive: it bears on its cover and title page a printer's ornament of *art nouveau* design. This consists of a full-blown lotus sitting atop what appears to be a pedestal of entwined spaghetti. If it could be proved that Mr. French had possessed this unusual device among the treasures of his press, then it

would go without saying that he had printed the booklet. A little search in the archives of the Vedanta Society of Northern California and lo! among Mrs. French's papers was found a small advertisement of her husband's print shop which bore the identical ornament. In view of this, no doubt remains of who printed the booklet. Since Mr. Clinton F. French clearly did, we can say with reasonable certainty that "Six Lessons on Raja Yoga" consists of notes of classes held by Swamiji not in Cambridge but in San Francisco, or, to be more exact, in his Turk Street flat. The "Lessons" themselves stand as a confirmation of this, for they comprise notes of just the kind of classes Mr. Rhodhamel described.

Who took down these notes remains a mystery, for as yet no manuscript has been found. They may, in fact, be the work of more than one person; it is possible that Mr. French collected the old notes of several students and, with the sanction and help of Swami Trigunatita, combined them to make a coherent whole. But in whatever way "Six Lessons" may have come into being, it contains the most detailed and complete information we have regarding the practical instructions Swamiji gave in the West to a small, informal group of people.

It is true that his book *Raja Yoga* contains some "simple and specific directions . . . for the student who wants to practice," but the New York classes, held in the winter of 1895-6, upon which the first part of *Raja Yoga* was based, were more or less formal and public. They constituted a part of his effort to give organized form to his total message; their purpose was not so much to give detailed instruction as to explain the true meaning of psychic and spiritual phenomena and states of mind, to place them on solid empirical and rational ground and to shine the exorcising light of reason into the mystery-ridden vapors that befogged them in the West. The Turk Street classes, on the other hand, were devoted primarily to giving instruction; they were intimate classes, meant for the few who wanted seriously to undertake spiritual practice.

How often during his first visit to the West Swamiji had held

such instruction classes for small groups is not known. One can guess, however, that it had not been often; for he was well aware—perhaps increasingly so as he lived and worked in America—of the faddish bent of the Western mind. “This [raja yoga] is no child’s play, no fad to be tried one day and discarded the next,” he admonished in a lecture or class entitled in the *Complete Works* “The Aim of Raja-Yoga.” “It is a life’s work.”⁴ Again, one remembers that toward the close of a lecture in Los Angeles, “The Powers of the Mind,” he said, “People ask me why I do not give them practical lessons. Why, it is no joke. I stand upon this platform talking to you and you go home and find no benefit; nor do I. Then you say, ‘It is all bosh.’ It is because you wanted to make a bosh of it...”⁵ Clearly, Swamiji was not intent upon giving practical instructions every day to every casual, fly-by-night inquirer. On the other hand, the very fact that he often gave a general explanation of the rationale, the methods, and the purpose of raja yoga, that he stressed again and again the importance of its practice, would indicate that wherever a number of earnest men and women came to him for guidance, he would gladly, indeed eagerly, form a class, giving instruction in as much detail and as intensively as would be possible in a group.

In addition to “Six Lessons,” there are a few evidences of such classes in the *Complete Works*. Yet none of these provides us with a detailed or complete idea of what instruction Swamiji gave. In volume eight one finds some notes entitled “Pranayama,” which, needless to say, give instructions in breathing exercises. It is obvious from the text that this particular class was one of a series, but when or where it was held we cannot say, for no date or place is given. Then in volume six one finds a single page of notes (also undated and unplaced) entitled “On Raja Yoga,” which may have been taken down during an introduction to a more or less private class. Also in volume six are some notes of the classes on raja yoga that Swamiji held in London in the summer of 1896 (“Lessons on Raja Yoga”), but whether these classes were primarily meant to instruct or

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

to explain is not clear from the incomplete notes themselves nor ascertainable at present from other reliable sources.

That is all one finds in the *Complete Works* to indicate possible instruction classes. But for the sake of completeness I should add here some notes that have not heretofore been published. A few years ago I requested from the New-York Historical Society a selected catalogue of Miss Emma Thursby's letters and papers and was overjoyed to find in the list I received the arresting item: "Large envelope inscribed 'Swami Vivekananda—Lessons in Yoga'—contains sixty-odd loose pages of notes in Miss Thursby's hand." Needless to say I sent for copies of those sixty-odd loose pages, and, knowing that Miss Thursby had attended many of Swamiji's classes, waited for them with high hopes. But when the notes arrived they proved, alas, to be a sorry jumble of heterogeneous, unidentifiable scribbles. which, though interesting in their way, were not Swamiji, nor were they all in Emma Thursby's hand. I need not here describe this welter of notes; enough to say that in its midst, like clearings in a wilderness, were four pages which, though scrappy, were undiluted, undistorted, unmistakable Swamiji.⁶ Two of these pages do not particularly concern us here, but I shall present them anyway. The first was a large sheet, bearing in an expansive, though not too legible, hand the following:

Swami Vivekananda Sunday Aug 12-1894

I am existence absolute

Kundilini

bliss absolute

Circle mother

I am He, Shivohum

I am He, Shivohum

Every hand is my hand

Kalidas—

Every foot is mine

Why shall I be miserable

He is the bound [learned?] man who sees that every man's property in [?] nothing Every woman his Mother Shanti, peace—

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

The date on the above (the only date in the whole bundle of notes) shows that it was taken down at Greenacre, Maine, on the last day of Swamiji's stay there. One thing of pertinent interest is the stray word "Kundilini"; as we shall see presently, at this early-date Swamiji was already teaching raja yoga. The second page of notes, also written on a large sheet of paper, but undated, read:

500 miles from Calcutta

	hrim
	Mother
We meditate on the Glory of	love
Rama mrgi—	The Tatwas
Buddhistic Prayer	
I bow to all the saints ever on Earth	
I bow to all the founders of Religion	
Prophets of Religion to all holy men & women	
who have been on Earth	
Hindu Prayer	
I meditate on the Glory of the producer of	
this Universe may He enlighten our minds	

In the above one hears, as it were, snatches from an instruction class blown to us by a fitful wind. Only the prayers come to us unbroken, particularly the Gayatri, the most sacred prayer of the Hindus. As we shall see a little later, Swamiji taught the Gayatri also in San Francisco. We come now to two pages of notes (actually one sheet of paper written on both sides) which were clearly taken down during a class in raja yoga. Their proper sequence is not clear, but I shall present them in the order of similar material in "Six Lessons":

[first page] 1 Prayer

We bow down to the Lord of the Universe

We bow down to all the saints & prophets that have been
& may come they will all help us

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

2. Holding the seat firm
3. Purifying the body
4. Breathing
5. Prayer

Whatever you take up put your whole soul in it Do not abuse or think badly of any religion they are all true & paths to the same end—

[second page] Yama not injuring any being by
 thought word or [and] deed
being truthful in [thought word and deed]
noncovetousness [in thought word and deed]
perfect chastity [in thought word and deed]
sinlessness [in thought word and deed]
Niyama restraining the mind from thinking evil thoughts
Asana posture
Pranayama restraining the breath
Pratyahara restraining the mind from going outwards
Dhyana meditation
Dharana concentration
Samadhi superconsciousness
Hips shoulders & head straight
Truth organized imagination
Untruth unorganized imagination
Imagination will be brought into
World Unity in variety
Each must follow his own nature which
may be found by practice—

Where and when (let alone by whom) these yoga notes were taken down, there is no knowing at the present time. They are not, in any event, particularly informative. A much more satisfactory group of notes, more recently discovered, comes from the same Thursby Collection at the New-York Historical Society. These were, without doubt, written by Miss Emma Thursby herself and, without doubt, were all taken down

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

during the course of Swamiji's classes at Greenacre in July and August of 1894. Not all these notes, it is true, are on the subject of raja yoga, but I am nonetheless reproducing them in full; for since they bring us new information about Swamiji's Greenacre classes under the "Swami's Pine" they will be of interest to his devotees—even though they belong in their entirety to another time and another book.

Written in Miss Thursby's not overly large hand, they covered both sides of two sheets of eight-by-eleven letter paper and read, unaltered, as follows:

Notes taken miscellaneously from discourses given by Swami Vivekananda under the "Pine" at Greenacre in July & August 1894.

The name of Swami's Master was Ramakrishna Parama Hamsa—

The signification of Vivekananda is, conscious bliss—

Meditation is a sort of prayer and prayer is meditation—

The highest meditation is to think of nothing. If you can remain one moment without thought, great power will come.

The whole secret of knowledge is concentration.

Soul best develops itself by loving God with all the heart.

Soul is the thinking principle in man, of which mind is a function.

Soul is only the conduit from Spirit to mind.

· All souls are playing, some consciously, some unconsciously—Religion is learning to play consciously.

The Guru is your own higher self.

Seek the highest, always the highest, for in the highest is Eternal bliss. If I am to hunt, I will hunt the Rhinoceros. If I am to rob, I will rob the treasury of the King. Seek the highest.

If I know you are bound—If you know you are free, you are free. My mind was never bound by yearnings of this world, for like the eternal blue sky, I am the essence of

knowledge of existence and of bliss. Why weepest thou brother? Neither death nor disease for thee, Why weepest thou brother? Neither misery nor misfortune for thee, Why weepest thou brother? Neither change nor death was predicated of thee, Thou Art Existence Absolute.

[Swamiji is here freely translating verses from the *Avadhuta Gita*.]

I know what God is, I cannot speak him to you. I know not [what] God is, how can I speak him to you, but seest not thou my brother that thou wert he, thou wert he? Why go seeking God here & there? Seek not and that is God. Be your own self. O One that cannot be confessed or described, One that can be perceived in our heart of hearts. One beyond all compare, beyond limit, unchangeable like the blue sky—Oh! learn the All Holy One. Seek for nothing else.

Where changes of nature cannot reach, thought beyond all thought, unchangeable, immovable, whom all books declare, all sages worship, O Holy One! Seek for nothing else.

Beyond compare, Infinite Oneness—No comparison is possible. Water above, water beneath, water on the right, water on the left, no wave on that water, no ripple, all silence, all eternal bliss. Such will come to thy heart. Seek for nothing else. Thou art our father, our mother, our dear friend, Thou bearest the burden of this world. Help us to bear the burden of our lives. Thou art our friend, our lover, our husband, thou art ourselves.

Four sorts of people worship me. Some want the delights of the physical world. Some want money, some want religion. Some worship me because they love me. Real love is love for love's sake. I do not ask health or money or life or salvation. Send me to a thousand hells, but let me love Thee for love's sake. Mirabai, the great Queen, taught the doctrine of love for love's sake. Our present consciousness is only a little bit of an infinite sea of mind.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Do not be limited to this consciousness. Three great things to be desired to develop the soul—First human birth, second thirst for the highest, third to find one who has reached the highest, a Mahatma, one whose mind, word & deed are full of the nectar of virtue, whose only pleasure is in doing good to the universe, who looks upon others' virtues be they only as a mustard seed, even as though they were a mountain; thus expanding his own self & helping others to expand; thus goes the Mahatma.

The word "yoga" is the root of which our word yoke is a derivation meaning to join, & yoga means joining ourselves with God. Joining me with my real self. All actions now involuntary or automatic were once voluntary & our first step is to gain a knowledge of the automatic actions, the real idea being to revivify & make voluntary all automatic actions, to bring them into consciousness. Many yogis can control the actions of their hearts. To go back into consciousness & bring out things we have forgotten is ordinary power but this can be heightened. All knowledge, all that can be brought out of the inner consciousness & to do this is yoga. The majority of actions & thoughts are automatic or acting behind consciousness. The seat of automatic action is in the medulla oblongata & down the spinal cord. The question is, how to find our way back to our inner consciousness. We have come out through spirit, soul, mind, & body, & now we must go back from body to spirit. First get hold of the air, then the nervous system, then the mind, then the atma or spirit, but in this effort we must be perfectly sincere in desiring the highest. The law of laws is concentration. First concentrate all the nerve energies & all power lodged in the cells of the body into one force & direct it at will. Then bring the mind, which is thinner matter, into one center. The mind has layer after layer; when the nerve force concentrated is made to pass through the spinal column, one layer of the mind is open. When it is

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

concentrated in one bone [plexus or "lotus"] another part of the world is open. So from world to world it goes until it touches the pineal gland in the center of the brain. This is the seat of conservation of potential energy, the source of both activity and passivity. Start with the idea that we can finish all experience in this world in this incarnation. We must aim to become perfect in this life this very moment. Success only comes to that life amongst men who wants to do this [this] very moment. It is acquired by him who says "Faith, I wait upon faith come what may." Therefore go on knowing you are to finish this very moment. Struggle hard and then, if you do not succeed, you are not to blame. Let the world praise or blame you. Let all the wealth of the earth come to your feet, or let you be made the poorest on earth, let death come this moment or hundreds of years hence, swerve not from the path you have taken. All good thoughts are immortal and go to make Buddhas & Christs.

Law is simply a means of expression, various phenomena brought into your mind. Law is your method of grasping material phenomena and bringing them into unity. All law is finding unity in variety. The only method of knowledge is concentration on the physical, mental, and spiritual planes, and concentrating the powers of the mind to discover one in many, is what is called knowledge.

Everything that makes for unity is moral, everything that makes for diversity is immoral. Know the One without a second, that is perfection. The One who manifests in all is the basis of the Universe, and all religion, all knowledge must come to this point.

It is clear from Miss Thursby's notes, which have been hidden away for so long, that Swamiji taught not only jnana yoga under the pine at Greenacre but also some raja yoga. Yet what practical instruction he may have given there we do not

know. Indeed, after reading through all the available notes on his raja yoga classes—both published and unpublished—we find that only in “Six Lessons” do we obtain a clear idea of the practical instruction he gave to small groups in the West. To these “Six Lessons,” then, let us turn, not only to learn what he taught in his San Francisco classes, but to learn as well the probable details of his yoga classes elsewhere.

15

“Six Lessons” can, of course be found in the *Complete Works*, but for the convenience of the reader I shall, as far as possible, distill from them Swamiji’s practical instructions; it will then be easier to see in what way these differ from the more general instructions given in, say, *Raja Yoga*. We shall miss in these extracts much of the persuasive charm and power with which the Turk Street classes were replete and which made them so unforgettable and profoundly stimulating to his listeners; the reader should bear in mind, therefore, that the following notes are excerpts only.

Before stripping “Six Lessons” it should be pointed out that it comprised not six but seven sections. The first was an introduction in which Swamiji explained that raja yoga was a science—“as much a science as any in the world.” “It is an analysis of the mind,” he said, “a gathering of the facts of the supersensuous world and so building up the spiritual world.”¹ As always, in small classes or large, his desire was to place religion on a scientific basis, showing its teachings to be founded, not on traditional beliefs, but on facts that had been experienced by many, that belonged to the natural (though subtle) order of things, and that were capable of verification by all human beings. Mystery and secrecy were anathema to him and, he was convinced, degenerative to religion. “Take every step in the light,” he was to say during the course of these instructions.

Another significant part of his introduction to “Six Lessons”

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

was his listing of the qualifications of the follower of jnana yoga or Advaita Vedanta. (He put these prerequisites in a somewhat different order than the traditional one. Nor did he give the customary English equivalents of the Sanskrit terms; rather, he briefly defined each ancient discipline in his own inimitable language, bringing it fresh and meaningful to the modern student.) "Without these disciplines," he concluded, "no result can be gained."²

As Mr. Rhodehamel pointed out, Swamiji taught raja yoga as the best means of acquiring the disciplines of Advaita Vedanta, all of which presuppose great mastery of the mind and senses. Indeed, Swamiji taught raja yoga, particularly during his second visit to the West, as an auxiliary path to jnana yoga. As he was to explain during a lecture in Alameda, "the central idea of all this training [in raja yoga] is to attain to [the] power of concentration, the power of meditation."³ And this power of meditation was to be combined with the practice of discrimination between the Real and the unreal, with the continual affirmation of the Self. "By means of discrimination [jnana yoga] and meditation [raja yoga], the goal, or Brahman, has to be reached," he said in India shortly before coming to America the second time. "This, in my opinion, is the easy path ensuring quick success."⁴ We find him stressing this combined path above all others during the last days of his mission. To be sure, Swamiji presented raja yoga as a powerful vehicle that could speed one along any path one might choose, but he hitched it firmly to the star of Advaita Vedanta, and he let no one forget that ultimate goal.

But let us now turn to the practical instructions he gave at Turk Street. I have taken the following excerpts directly from the booklet. (The italicized comments are mine.)

FIRST LESSON

... The best time for practice is the junction of day and night, the calmest time in the *times* of our bodies, the zero point between two states. If this cannot be done,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

practice upon rising and going to bed. Exquisite personal cleanliness is necessary (daily bath).

After bathing, sit down and hold the seat firm, that is, imagine that you sit as firm as a rock, that nothing can move you. Hold the head and shoulders and the hips in a straight line, keeping the spinal column free; all action is along it and it must not be impaired.

Begin with your toes and hold each part of your body perfect, picture it so in your mind, touching each part if you prefer to do so. Pass upward bit by bit until you reach the head, holding each perfect, lacking nothing. Then hold the whole perfect, an instrument given to you by God, to enable you to attain Truth, the vessel in which you are to cross the ocean and reach the shores of eternal truth. When this has been done, take a long breath through both nostrils, throw it out again and then hold it out as long as you comfortably can. Take four such breaths, then breathe naturally and pray for illumination.

“I meditate on the glory of that being who created this universe; may he illuminate my mind.” Sit and meditate on this ten or fifteen minutes....⁵

SECOND LESSON

...Second Lesson in Breathing—One method is not for all. This breathing must be done with rhythmic regularity, and the easiest way is by counting; as that is purely mechanical, we repeat the sacred word “Om” a certain number of times instead.

This pranayama consists in closing the right nostril with the thumb and then slowly inhaling through the left nostril, repeating the word “Om” four times.

Then firmly close both nostrils by placing forefinger on left one and drop the head on the chest and hold the breath in, mentally repeating the “Om” eight times.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Then lift the head erect and removing the thumb from the right nostril, exhale slowly through that, repeating the "Om" four times.

As you close the exhalation, draw in the abdomen forcibly to expel all the air from the lungs. Then slowly inhale through the right nostril, keeping the left one closed, repeating the "Om" four times. Next close the right nostril with thumb, drop the head, hold the breath while repeating "Om" eight times. Then lift the head erect, uncloze the left nostril and slowly exhale, repeating "Om" four times, drawing in the abdomen as before. Repeat this whole operation twice at each sitting, that is, making four pranayamas, two for each nostril. Before taking your seat it is well to begin with prayer.

This needs to be practiced a week, then gradually increase the number of breathings, keeping the same ratio, that is, if you make six pranayamas, repeat the "Om" six times at inhalation and exhalation and twelve during kumbhaka [restraint of the breath]. These exercises will make us more spiritual, more pure, more holy.⁶

THIRD LESSON

In the Second Lesson Swamiji had given a brief explanation of the spinal nerve currents, pingala and ida. "These currents," he had said in part, "flow day and night and make deposits of the great life forces at different points, commonly known as 'plexuses.' . . . These 'sun and moon' currents are intimately connected with breathing, and by regulating this we get control of the body." In a passage such as one does not find elsewhere in his talks on this subject, he applied the metaphor of the chariot that is given in the Katha Upanishad to the control of pingala and ida. "These two currents," he said, "are the great 'check rein' in the hands of the charioteer [the intellect] and he must get control of them to control the horses [the senses]. We have to get the power to become moral; until we do we cannot control our actions. Yoga alone enables us to carry into practice the teachings of morality. To

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

become moral is the object of Yoga.”’ In the third lesson, Swamiji continued his explanation :

We must give a new direction to the sun [pingala] and moon [ida] currents and open for them a new passage through the spinal cord. When we succeed in bringing the currents through the “sushumna” up to the pineal gland, we are for the time being separated entirely from the body. The nervous center at the base of the spine near the “sacrum” is most important. It is the seat of the generative substance of the sexual energies and is symbolized by the Yogi as a triangle containing a tiny serpent coiled up in it. This sleeping serpent is called Kundalini, and to raise this Kundalini is the whole object of Raja Yoga.

[Swamiji then went on to explain the transmutation of sexual force into spiritual force, or *ojas*. The notes here read in part:] One in whom the whole animal sex force has been transformed into *ojas* is a God. He speaks with power and his words regenerate the world.... No man or woman can be really spiritual until the sexual energy, the highest power possessed by man, has been converted into *ojas*. No force can be created; it can only be directed. Therefore, we must learn to control the grand powers that are already in our hands and by will power make them spiritual instead of merely animal. Thus it is clearly seen that chastity is the corner stone of all morality and of all religion. In Raja Yoga especially ABSOLUTE CHASTITY in thought, word and deed is a *sine qua non*. The same laws apply to married and single. If one wastes the most potent forces of his being, he cannot become spiritual. [Only at the very end of this class did Swamiji give specific instruction:]

Just before making the pranayama [as given in the Second Lesson] endeavor to visualize the triangle. Close your eyes and picture it vividly in your imagination. See it surrounded by flames and with the serpent coiled in the middle. When you can clearly see the Kundalini, place it

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

in imagination at the base of the spine and when restraining the breath in Kumbhaka, throw it forcibly down on the head of the serpent to awaken it. The more powerful the imagination the more quickly will the real result be attained and the Kundalini will awaken. Until it does, imagine it does; try to feel the currents and try to force them through the sushumna. This hastens their action.⁸

FOURTH LESSON

*Although the notes did not so specify, this fourth lesson dealt with pratyahara, which Swamiji had defined earlier as "turning the mind inward and restraining it from going outward, revolving the matter in the mind in order to understand it."*⁹

The easiest way to get hold of the mind is to sit quiet and let it drift where it will for a while. Hold fast to the idea "I am the witness, watching my mind drifting. The mind is not I. Then see it think as if it were a thing entirely apart from yourself. Identify yourself with God, never with matter or with the mind.

Picture the mind as a calm lake stretched before you and the thoughts that come and go as bubbles rising and breaking on its surface. Make no effort to control the thoughts, but watch them and follow them in imagination as they float away. This will gradually lessen the circles [of thought] . . . until at last we can fix the mind on one point and make it stay there. Hold to the idea I am not the mind, I see that I am thinking, I am watching my mind act, and each day the identification of yourself with thought and feeling will grow less, until at last you can entirely separate yourself from the mind and actually know it to be apart from yourself.

When this is done, the mind is your servant to control as you will. . . .¹⁰

FIFTH LESSON

In the notes, this lesson was headed "Pratyahara and Dharana."

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Here Swamiji briefly reviewed the instructions in paatyahara given in the preceding lesson and then continued:

After sufficient practice of closing the nostrils with thumb and finger we shall be able to do it by the power of will through thought alone.

Pranayama is now to be slightly changed. If the student has received an "Ishta," use that [name of God] instead of "Om" during inhalation and exhalation, and use the word "Hum" (pronounced Hoom) during Kumbhaka.

Throw the restrained breath forcibly down on the head of Kundalini at each repetition of the word Hum and imagine that this awakens her. Identify yourself only with God. After a while thoughts will announce their coming and we shall learn the way they begin and be aware of what we are going to think. Just as on this plane we can look out and see a person coming. This stage is reached when we have learned to separate ourselves from our minds and see ourselves as one and thought as something apart. Do not let the thoughts grasp you; stand aside and they will die away.

Follow these holy thoughts; go with them and when they melt away you will find the feet of the Omnipotent God. This is the superconscious state; when the idea melts, follow it and melt with it. . . .

Be cheerful, be brave, bathe daily, have patience, purity and perseverance, then you will become a Yogi in truth. Never try to hurry, and, if the higher [psychic] powers come, remember that they are but side paths; do not let them tempt you from the main road; put them aside and hold fast to your only true aim—God. Seek only the Eternal, finding which we are at rest for ever; having the all, nothing is left to strive for, and we are for ever in free and perfect existence.

EXISTENCE ABSOLUTE, KNOWLEDGE ABSOLUTE, BLISS ABSOLUTE.¹¹

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

SIXTH LESSON

This lesson was headed in the booklet "Savikalpa and the Sushumna." The notes were very brief, comprising only one booklet page; yet they contained an instruction we do not find Swamiji giving elsewhere in the West:

It is very useful to meditate on the Sushumna. You may have a vision of it come to you and this is the best way. Then meditate for a long time on that. It is a very fine, very brilliant thread, this living passage through the spinal cord, this way of salvation through which we have to make the Kundalini rise.

The class notes closed with a listing of six centers or "lotuses," from that at the base of the spine to that in the brain. (The second center from the bottom was here omitted.) "We must awaken the Kundalini," Swamiji said, "then slowly raise it from one lotus to another till the brain is reached. Each stage corresponds to a new layer of the mind."¹² And thus ended the notes of "Six Lessons on Raja Yoga."

16

The reader will have found much in the above that is similar to the practical instructions Swamiji gave in *Raja Yoga*, but he will also have noted certain differences and additions, most of which occur in the instructions regarding *pranayama*. As Swamiji pointed out in *Raja Yoga*, the science of *pranayama* was highly developed by the yogis who followed Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga Sutras*. Swamiji gave some of these later techniques in *Raja Yoga*; but he taught them in more detail in his San Francisco classes and, presumably, in his small instruction classes elsewhere. It will not be amiss to point out in what respects his practical instruction to small groups, as represented by "Six Lessons," differed from his more general teachings; for the practical instruction Swamiji gave in the West was, after all, an important part of his mission, and one likes to know as best one can how he adapted the immensely complex and intricate

practices of yoga, his knowledge of which was vast, to the modern world. We are, of course, at a disadvantage here: "Six Lessons," which is the closest we can come to Swamiji's detailed instructions, is obviously not a complete transcript. His classes often lasted for two hours or more, whereas the notes are brief. Still, they give us some idea of the kind of *pranayama* he gave to a group.

In *Raja Yoga* Swamiji described three types of breathing exercises. The second, and the most difficult, was the one he taught in San Francisco. Its technical name is *sahita*, and it consists, as we have seen, of alternately inhaling through one nostril, retaining the breath, and exhaling through the other nostril. Swamiji did not recommend as strenuous a ratio between the duration of the three parts of this *pranayama* in San Francisco as he had in New York and London, in which places he gave the more traditional one-four-two. In San Francisco (and also in the undated class notes entitled "Pranayama," to which we have referred earlier) he advised the easier ratio of one-two-one. But if he made things simpler in this respect, he added certain subtleties of practice. He prescribed, for one thing, certain *mudras* or, specifically, *bandhas*, which are usually employed in all types of *pranayama*. These are attitudes of body efficacious in the control of *prana* and in the generation of heat (or energy) around the Kundalini, thereby rousing it. Pressing the chin to the chest (*jalandhara*) during the retention of the breath is one kind of *bandha*; drawing in the abdomen forcibly (*uddiyana*) during exhalation is another; a third, used in conjunction with the first, is the contraction of the rectal muscles (*mula-bandha*). As we have seen, Swamiji prescribed the first two of these *bandhas* in San Francisco. (The first has been omitted from "Six Lessons" as published in the *Complete Works*. Conceivably, he also gave the third, for it is considered of importance in the complex and subtle process of *pranayama*. It may have been omitted from the 1913 booklet, but until a manuscript of the original notes can be found, this must remain only a conjecture.)

In addition to giving at least two *bandhas*, Swamiji seems to have laid greater stress in "Six Lessons" upon the potent role played by the imagination in *pranayama* than he had in the other raja yoga classes available to us. He was, certainly, more specific. The vivid picture in the Third Lesson which he asked his listeners to visualize is symbolic of the fiery play of *prana* around the triangle wherein Kundalini sleeps. Contemplation upon this symbol is itself conducive to awakening the infinite power coiled within man. Again, in Mr. Rhodehamel's memoirs one finds Swamiji's instruction: "Try to look down the spinal cord from the base of the brain to the base of the spine. Imagine that you are looking through the hollow Sushumna to the Kundalini rising upward to the brain."¹

Another important element in the practice of *pranayama* is given in the Fifth Lesson. Here Swamiji prescribed the use of the name of the student's *Ishta* (if he had one) during inhalation and exhalation, and the repetition of the word "hum" during *kumbhaka*. "Hum"—sometimes transliterated as "hung"—is a seed-word or *bija*, which, like the *bandhas* and the use of the imagination, is said to be efficacious in rousing Kundalini and starting it on its upward course. (It may be worthy of note that Swamiji generally referred to Kundalini as "it," not "She"—the Divine Shakti—as is customary in Tantric Yoga. In placing yoga on a scientific basis he avoided religious terms as far as possible.)

The use of *bandhas*, the visualization of specific symbols, the repetition of certain words did not by any means constitute frills or incidental practices; simple as they may seem, they were intrinsic parts of *pranayama* and potent elements in the process of raising the Kundalini. Nor were they without their danger. Indeed, breathing exercises could in themselves be dangerous if imperfectly or carelessly practiced. In his preface to *Raja Yoga* Swamiji warned of this, and at the close of the chapter on "The Control of Psychic Prana" he wrote, "There must be perfect chastity in thought, word and deed; without it the practice of Raja Yoga is dangerous and may lead to

insanity.”² The teacher as well as the student could be at fault. We find Swamiji laying down a definite rule in this respect. “I know very little of the young man R—,” he wrote to Miss Ellen Waldo in October of 1896 in regard to a proposed lecturer for the New York Vedanta Society. “You know my settled doctrine. I do not trust any one who has not conquered ‘lust and gold.’ You may try him in theoretical subjects, but keep him off from teaching Raja-Yoga—that is a dangerous game except for the regularly trained to play at. Of Saradananda, the blessing of the greatest Yogi of modern India [Sri Ramakrishna] is on him—and there is no danger.”³ Warnings against the rash and blundering practice of *pranayama* are as old, perhaps, as the science itself. “As lions, elephants, and tigers are gradually tamed,” says the *Shandilya Upanishad*, “so also the breath when rightly managed comes under control; else it kills the practitioner.”⁴

Swamiji’s instructions in regard to *pratyahara* (restraint of the mind from going outward) did not differ appreciably in “Six Lessons” from those given in *Raja Yoga*, except that in San Francisco he emphasized, as he did in London also, the extreme importance of disidentifying oneself from the moving mind.

As for the steps of *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and the first stages of *samadhi* (illumination, or super-consciousness), group instruction could be given only in a general way. It is not likely, for instance, that Swamiji would give an *Ishta* to a group of people, however intimate and small that group might have been, for the “chosen ideal” and object of meditation is an individual matter, to be given, received, and held in secret, not so much because of the mystery involved in it as because of its sanctity. It is interesting to note, however, that in the Sixth Lesson Swamiji did prescribe a specific, though secondary, object of meditation—the “very fine, very brilliant thread” of the *sushumna*. One notes further in this connection that he seems to have expected at least some of his San Francisco students to have a true vision, at one time or

another, of "this living passage through the spinal cord." Such a vision would signify much progress indeed. "When one has a vision of the *Sushumnā*," he once told his Indian disciple Chakravarty, "one can see anything one likes."⁵ And again during his last talk to the same disciple he said, "If the mind once enters the path of *Sushumnā*, everything will get right. You will not have to do much after that."⁶

In addition to prescribing this specific meditation on the *sushumna*, Swamiji gave a general instruction in San Francisco, and in London also, in regard to meditation. "You cannot meditate on God without some form," he had said in London. "One will come to you, for thought and symbol are inseparable. Try to fix your mind on that form."⁷ And in San Francisco, "The highest ideal we have is God [with form]. Meditate on Him. We cannot know the [Formless] Knower, but we are He."⁸ One finds in Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences" a further instruction in this regard: "He told those in his meditation class," she said, "that they should try to think of themselves as related closely to Kali or Shiva or to whomever they meditated upon."⁹ (These instructions in meditation were not necessarily the same as those he gave to individuals. Although little is known of his private prescriptions, one finds here and there hints of their wide diversity. In a letter to a Hindu woman, for instance, he wrote, "In the preliminary state, the form of the Guru is to be meditated upon by the disciple. Gradually it is to be merged in the Ishtam. By Ishtam is meant the object of love and devotion."¹⁰ At the opposite extreme, he told the young householder Chakravarty not to meditate upon a form of God at all. "You yourself will be the object of your meditation," he said. "Think and meditate that you are the omnipresent Atman. 'I am neither the body, nor the mind, nor the Buddhi, neither the gross nor the subtle body'—by this process of elimination, immerse your mind in the transcendent knowledge which is your real nature. Kill the mind by thus plunging it repeatedly in this."¹¹ As for monastics: "We have renounced the world. So how will it suit us to practice by

putting ourselves in some worldly relation—such as that of mother, or father, or wife, or son and so forth—with God. To us all these ideals appear to be narrow.”¹² Again, to Miss MacLeod, as she mentions in her reminiscences, he said simply, “Meditate on the word ‘Om.’ ”¹³ But for all, the goal was the same. “Know this thoroughly,” he once said in discussing various paths, “that the goal of the path of discrimination and of all other modes of practice is the realisation of Brahman.”¹⁴

An important aspect of Swamiji’s instruction in raja yoga which should not go without mention was the set of practices preliminary to *pranayama*. In all the available records of his classes in practical instruction he included these preliminary exercises, if one may so call them, and although they seem to have varied in sequence and number each time he gave them, their intent was by and large the same. They seem, in a sense, to be tokens for *yama* and *niyama*, those life-long moral observances necessary to success in spiritual progress. In any event, Swamiji gave much importance to at least two of these practices, prescribing them, as far as we know, almost always. One was the mental purification and strengthening of the body. “Always use a mental effort, what is usually called ‘Christian Science,’ to keep the body strong,” he wrote in *Raja Yoga*.¹⁵ And in the booklet “Six Lessons” one reads, “Begin with your toes and hold each part of your body perfect; picture it so in your mind, touching each part if you prefer to do so.”¹⁶ Second was the practice of sending a current of good will to all creation—a practice that he may have borrowed from Hindu scriptures. (Or could it be that Swamiji brought the all-encompassing heart of Buddha into his raja yoga? “Let all-embracing thoughts for all that lives be thine,” a translation of the “Met-tasutta” of the Buddhist *Sutta-Nipata* reads, “—an all-embracing love for all the universe in all its heights and depths and breadth.”¹⁷) “The more you [send a current of good-will to all creation],” Swamiji said, “the better you will feel. You will find at last that the easiest way to make ourselves . . . happy is to see that others are happy.”¹⁸ (Curiously, this practice is

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

omitted from the notes of "Six Lessons"; but wherever else we find Swamiji giving practical instruction, East or West, there we find it.) In San Francisco, he included among the preliminary exercises two practices which we do not find elsewhere as preliminaries. One was a simple breathing exercise designed to purify the nerves; the other was the repetition of the Gayatri, the sacred prayer of the Hindus—so very sacred indeed that traditionally women and the lower classes, let alone Westerners, were not supposed so much as to hear it. Swamiji gave no heed to such restrictions.

All these ways of purifying the mind, the nerves, the senses, of preparing them for the great ascent of the soul in profound meditation, he carefully taught to the little group in San Francisco. And he taught far more than can be taught in words. One cannot forget that his essential teaching took place largely in silence. Indeed the value of Swamiji's small classes lay more in his direct, living contact with each person who sat near him than in the details of his instruction. The power and radiance of his personality, his ability to awaken love for God, to impart a glimpse of transcendental reality, revealing the end even as he taught the means, was here manifest to a still greater degree than in his lectures. "At these Yoga classes one came closer to the man and teacher than was possible in the lecture hall," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote. "The contact was more personal and the influence more direct. The embodiment of holiness, simplicity and wisdom, he seemed speaking with incisive power, and drawing one's mind more to God and renunciation than to proficiency in Raja Yoga practices."¹⁰ And again, "Here the teacher of wisdom revealed himself as a power of love. The fiery aggressiveness of that mind more than able to cope with all opposition gave way to a gentle friendliness of demeanour which mirrored beneath his winsome, capricious temperament a depth of consciousness, remote and inaccessible. Here the undisguised admiration of audiences for the lecturer was transformed into devotion to the Guru.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

The second stage of spiritual culture was now under way,—the absorption of what had been heard into thought... Like babies learning to talk, that difficult task made delightful by the loving attentions of the mother, the Swami's spiritual babies dallied with his every word and drank in the sweetness of his badinage as he tried to teach them how to think."²⁰

But lest Mr. Rhodehamel mislead one into forming too soft a picture of Swamiji in his classes, we should add here a memory of Mrs. Hansbrough's. "He sometimes," she said, "could be very sharp. Once when he was talking of renunciation, a woman asked him, 'Well, Swami, what would become of the world if everyone renounced?' His answer was, 'Madam, why do you come to me with that lie on your lips? You have never considered anything in this world but your own pleasure!'"²¹ Gentle, patient, and loving though he was, he seldom hesitated to deliver a pointed rebuke when it was called for. His purpose was always to open the mind to light, never to bring comfort to its darkness. Yet as a rule Swamiji softened his rebukes. On one occasion, recalled by Mrs. Allan, he had been talking to his class in "a very learned way, when suddenly he stopped and said with great feeling, 'I am the disciple of a man who could not write his own name, and I am not worthy to undo his shoes. How often have I wished I could take my intellect and throw it into the Ganges!'" 'But, Swami,' a lady remarked, 'that is the part of you I like best.' To which Swamiji replied, 'That is because you are a fool, Madam—like I am.'"²² It was this "like I am" spoken in all sincerity that made his love so accessible, his friendship so secure.

When one considers Swamiji's classes at Turk Street, one marvels at the picture that rises to mind. Here was this World Teacher whom one can place beside the greatest "Messengers" mankind has known, sitting in a poor flat half a world away from his homeland, training a small group of "spiritual babies" to take the first steps along the Himalayan climb to liberation! He taught them with infinite care and love, lavishing upon them the warmth of his heart, joking with them to ease tension,

rebuking them when necessary, assuring them of his protection when they grew afraid, and in every mood, with every word and in every silence pouring upon them his grace. He held back nothing, except perhaps the full force of his power, lest it overwhelm them.

17

There is little doubt that Swamiji held many private interviews at his Turk Street flat, for many of the men and women who attended his classes would surely have wanted to discuss their personal problems and experiences with him and to learn more of how they could spiritualize their individual lives. But among those who availed of the opportunity to talk to him privately only two people wrote their memoirs. One, of course, was Frank Rhodehamel.

Mr. Rhodehamel evidently had several interviews with Swamiji and found him "the ideal host, entering into conversation, argument or story-telling, not only without restraint, but with apparent enjoyment." To judge from the fragments of conversation that Mr. Rhodehamel recalled in his memoirs (as published in the *Life*),¹ he could ask questions that poked, as it were, at the honeycomb and that drew forth Swamiji's views on many subjects:

"Speaking of spiritual training for the mind," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote, "he said, 'The less you read the better. What are books but the vomitings of other men's minds? Why fill your mind with a load of stuff you will have to get rid of? Read the Gita and other good works on Vedanta. That is all you need.' Then again: 'The present system of education is all wrong. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts, if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

... People are always suffering because they can't control their minds. To give an illustration, though a rather crude one: A man has trouble with his wife. She leaves him and goes with other men. She's a terror! But, poor fellow, he can't take his mind away from her, and so he suffers.'

"I asked him to explain why the practice of begging, common among religious mendicants, was not opposed to renunciation. He replied, 'It is a question of the mind. If the mind anticipates, and is affected by the results—that is bad, no doubt. The giving and receiving of alms should be free; otherwise it is not renunciation. If you should put a hundred dollars on that table for me, and should expect me to thank you for it you could take it away again. I would not touch it. My living was provided for before I came here, before I was born. I have no concern about it. Whatever belongs to a man he will get. It was ready for him before he was born.'

"To the question, 'What do you think about the Immaculate Conception [Virgin Birth] of Jesus?' he replied: 'That is an old claim. There have been many in India who have claimed that. I don't know anything about it. But for my part, I am glad that I had a natural father and mother.' 'But isn't such a theory opposed to the law of nature?' I ventured. 'What is nature to the Lord? It is all His play,' he replied as he knocked the ash from his pipe against the heel of his slipper, regardless of the carpeted floor. Then blowing through the stem to clear it, he continued, 'We are slaves of nature. The Lord is the Master of nature. He can do as He pleases. He can take one or a dozen bodies at a time, if He chooses, and in any way He chooses. How can we limit Him?' "

But what made the most profound impression on Mr. Rhodhamel was not so much Swamiji's conversation during those interviews as Swamiji himself. "What remains vivid," he wrote more than ten years later, "is the contact with the great Sannyasin—the impressions and impetus received—which refuses to be less than the greatest experience in life."

Edith Allan, the wife of Thomas Allan, was the other person

who we know talked privately with Swamiji. As the reader may remember, we left Mrs. Allan many pages back on the eve of her first interview. "Come tomorrow morning," he had said. "Much of the night was spent thinking of all the questions I should ask him," Mrs. Allan recalled in her memoirs, "as many questions had been troubling me for months and no one to whom I had gone was able to help me."² She was then thirty-five years old, a slender, near beautiful woman, who looked younger than her years. A photograph taken of her about two years after she had met Swamiji shows her singing in the choir of the Home of Truth in Alameda and looking like a half-wistful, half-willful college girl with an untroubled oval face and a wealth of dark hair drawn back loosely and simply. Possibly she looked even younger and more immature when Swamiji first saw her, certainly more fragile and less serene. At that time she had been ill, physically and mentally, for a year or two and, as she said, had nowhere found relief. In the words of a rough draft of her memoirs, she "had played with fire and got into a psychic condition,"³ or, as I have heard from a reliable source, she had dabbled in occultism and had suffered a nervous collapse. This was precisely the sort of trouble that Swamiji had often warned against during his first visit to the West, and there is no question that, as Mrs. Allan had sat in Washington Hall waiting for her husband to count the ticket money, he had recognized at a glance her difficulty and her need for help. Thus he had called her to him.

Mrs. Allan arrived at the Turk Street flat at the appointed time (nine o'clock, according to one account) on what must have been the morning of March 10. When the door was opened by its upstairs lever and she asked to see the Swami, she was told from the top of the stairs (by either Mrs. Hansbrough or Mrs. Aspinall) that he was on his way out and could see no one. A person less in need would have perhaps turned away, but Edith Allan stood her ground. "I know he will see me," she said, "because he told me to come." The logic of this being unassailable, she was asked to come upstairs, was shown

into the front parlor, given a chair by the bay window, and told to wait. And to be sure, Swamiji soon entered. He was dressed for the street in his long overcoat and round black turban, and he was chanting softly. He sat on a chair on the opposite side of the room (or, as another account has it, on the other side of the bay window). "He continued chanting softly," Mrs. Allan recalled, "in his incomparable way." Presently he said, "Well, madam!"

"I could not speak," she related, "but began to weep and kept on weeping as though the floodgates had been opened." He let her weep on and on—"for about half an hour," she once recalled; and when the purging flood of tears had subsided a little, he said, "Come tomorrow about the same time." That was all. "As I went from his presence," she recalled years later in her reminiscences, "my problems were solved and my questions were answered, though he had not asked me anything. ["When I went out onto the street, each cobblestone looked like an opal," she told a friend. "Somehow, I got home."]⁴ It is now over twenty-four years since that interview with the Swami, yet it stands out in memory as the greatest blessing of my life."⁵

She came the following morning and perhaps one or two mornings after that. At these subsequent interviews Swamiji gave her some spiritual instruction. "He told me how to meditate," she once said, "and he also taught me some simple breathing exercises, although he warned me never to practice them except in his presence."⁶ But shortly, as we have seen, other people discovered the Turk Street flat (through her, Mrs. Allan used to say); others asked for interviews, the morning class was started, and, to her great regret, her private sessions with Swamiji came to an end.

Yet he continued to be extremely gracious to her. According to Miss Ansell's account of Mrs. Allan's memories, he invited her to stay to lunch only on the day of his last class, but according to Mrs. Allan's own written account, which is clearer on this point in its rough form than in the published version, she "had

the advantage of being with Swamiji every day for a month while he was in San Francisco and after that in Alameda—another month.”⁷ Perhaps on some of these days Swamiji spoke only briefly to her; but more than once he would invite her to stay for lunch after the class and would let her help him in the kitchen “peeling onions and potatoes” while he engaged in his favorite task of cooking some spicy dish. (Potatoes were not always an ingredient. “In the Turk Street apartment,” Mrs. Hansbrough once said, “he often cooked palao, that rich dish made with rice and meat.”)⁸ To be in the kitchen with Swamiji was a privilege not afforded to everyone. The story goes that one day Mrs. Aspinall entered with the information that Miss Lydia Bell, the heavyset, somewhat opinionated head of the California Street Home of Truth, wanted to stay for lunch. “Ail right,” Swamiji said, “she can stay”—for he liked Miss Bell. ‘Do! keep her out of the kitchen!’⁹ There was, actually, no reason for Miss Bell to be in the kitchen with Swamiji; but for Mrs. Allan those relaxed hours in his company were a deeply needed, deeply healing balm.

In one of the rough drafts of her memoirs, which are preserved in the archives of the Vedanta Society of Northern California and some portions of which are not found elsewhere, one comes upon snatches of Swamiji’s talk during these happy times. “In the kitchen at Turk Street while cooking,” she wrote, “he talked Philosophy, chanted verse 61, Chapter 18, of the Gita, ‘The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, by His illusive power causing all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter’s wheel.’ ‘This has all happened before,’ he said. ‘Like the throw of dice, so it is in life; the wheel goes on and the same combination comes up; that pitcher and glass have stood there before, so, too, that onion and potato. What can we do, Madam, He has us on the wheel of life.’

“He longed to be free of the body. ‘I have to come back once more,’ he said. ‘The Master said I am to come back once more with him.’ ‘You have to come back because Sri Ramakrishna

says so?" I asked. 'Souls like that have great power, Madam,' he replied." (In Pasadena, Swamiji had made a similar statement. "It was probably during an after-lunch conversation when he was walking up and down the living room," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "that Swamiji told us, 'The Master said he would come again in about two hundred years—and I will come with him. When a Master comes, he brings his own people.'")¹⁰

Once Mrs. Allan asked Swamiji about his triumphant reception when he returned to India in 1897, which she had no doubt read about in the newspapers. But he was always loath to speak of honor paid to himself. "Madam," he said, "I never felt such a fool." Possessions distressed him as much as fame. "He had a trunk with clothes, books, etc." Mrs. Allan's draft continues. "'I am ashamed to have a trunk,' he said. 'I am a Sannyasin.' And he quoted from his poem, *The Song of the Sannyasin*, 'Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend? The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed. . . .'" (He was perhaps more burdened than ashamed to have a trunk. "About his clothes," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "he used to say, 'In India I can exist on hips and haws and live in rags, but here I want to meet your demands.'")¹¹

When Swamiji moved in April to the Alameda Home of Truth, Mrs. Allan continued to see him every day—more easily now, as she was living in Alameda at the time—and again she could be with him in the kitchen when, on Sunday afternoons, he would cook for himself (not for the whole household, as Miss Ansell has it in her published memoirs). Here he set her again to various tasks and shared with her his Hindu dishes.

"He was so many-sided," Mrs. Allan's draft continued, "wonderful beyond description. All things to all men; he was all the four Yogas. Sometimes the Vedanta lion, sometimes like a child; to me he was always the patient and loving parent. Nothing was too small for his notice and interest—such love as cannot be comprehended; he always listened. He told me not

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

to call him Swami, but to call him 'Babaji,' as the children did in India."

But there was a line between informality and familiarity that Swamiji never crossed. He was ever the patient father, but to conduct that carried overtones, however unconscious, of femininity he simply did not respond. One Sunday when he was happily preparing a dish in the Home of Truth kitchen, some butter splattered from a frying pan onto Mrs. Allan's dress—a new green dress that she was wearing proudly for the first time, its splendor uneclipsed by anything like an apron. "I carried on at a great rate over this tragedy," she recalled, "but Swamiji continued chanting, going about his work without taking the slightest notice. Later a friend sponged the spots with gasoline, and they completely disappeared. I felt like a fool."¹²

Once Swamiji and Mrs. Allan walked to an Alameda store for pickles. These were kept in a big tub of brine and were ladled for customers into dishes of paper-thin wood. On the way back some brine spilled onto Swamiji's hand. Promptly and with delight he licked his fingers. "Oh, Swami!" Mrs. Allan cried, shocked at behavior so undignified. "Madam," he retorted quickly, "you always want this little outside to be so nice. That's the trouble with you here. It is not the outside that matters, it is the inside."¹³

One could not be long with Swamiji without absorbing one lesson after another, but "he was fun all the time," Mrs. Allan said, and certainly he was never "long-faced." "Should you see anyone with a long, sad face," Mr. Allan quoted him, "you may know that he has not got religion, but he may have the stomach-ache." In the kitchen his counsel went on, vibrant with life. "If I consider myself greater than the ant that crawls on the ground I am ignorant," he once said.¹⁴ And again, "Madam, be broad-minded; always see two ways. When I am on the heights I say 'Shivoham, Shivoham; I am He, I am He!' and when I have the stomach-ache I say, 'Mother have mercy on me!'"¹⁵ Or he told her, "Learn to be the witness. If two

dogs are fighting on the street and I go out there, I get mixed up in the fight, but if I stay quietly in my room I witness the fight from the window. So learn to be the witness."¹⁶

"I don't think that way," Mrs. Allan would sometimes say when Swamiji gave her such jewels. Whereupon he would laugh. "Don't you, madam? Well, that's fine."¹⁷ But many years later she was to remember and cherish his words. "How little we understood Swamiji!" she wrote then. "We had no knowledge of what he really was—the mouthpiece of the Lord Himself!"¹⁸ Yet even if Mrs. Allan's conscious mind did not know who this was who at her first meeting with him had answered all her unspoken questions in silence, who had restored her to health, who told jokes in one breath and chanted the Gita in the next, who walked like a king and licked his fingers like a child, a deeper part of her mind knew. She who had barely been able to drag herself to hear him the first time, attended all his subsequent lectures, as well as his classes. There was no getting enough of him. "But it was the close contact with the Swami that I most deeply cherish,"¹⁹ she wrote years later. And to a friend she once said, "He was kindness itself to me. Most people emphasize his great power, the side of him that was so awe-inspiring. But there was this other side to him—his great love. He was like the most tender and loving mother."²⁰ "Before he left California," she said another time, "he told me that if I ever got into psychic difficulty again, or any other kind of trouble, to call on him and he would hear me wherever he was. I've had occasion to take advantage of his promise many times."²¹

18

But we were speaking of the interviews Swamiji gave at his Turk Street flat. Although we know only of those he gave to Mr. Rhodehamel and Mrs. Allan, he must have seen other people privately and have given spiritual instruction to a least a few. We know from "Six Lessons," for instance, that some

members of his class had a mantra—a name of God or of a spiritual ideal. It would seem, then, that he had given initiation to at least some people in California; for from whom except Swamiji could one living on the West Coast in the early part of 1900 have received a mantra? Yet, to our knowledge, none of those who had known him and who continued to study and practice Vedanta after he left considered themselves to be his disciples. Many were to take initiation from either Swami Turiyananda or Swami Trigunatita: Mr. Rhodehamel, for instance, from the former; Mr. and Mrs. Allan from the latter. One wonders why this was so. The thing that concerns us here is not, of course, the spiritual lives of these people, but what constituted being a disciple of Swamiji.

That he made thousands of disciples in the West is certain; for he himself said so. "Well, Swamiji, how many disciples have you in the West?" a man once asked him in Calcutta. "Two or three thousand?" "Maybe more than that," Swamiji replied. "Are they all initiated by you with Mantras?" the questioner continued. "Yes," Swamiji replied. "Did you give them permission to utter Pranava (Om)?" "Yes," Swamiji replied again.¹

(It is interesting to note in passing that the questioner, a high-caste Hindu by the name of Priya Nath Sinha, was much alarmed to learn this. "How did you, Maharaj?" he exclaimed. "They say that the Shudras have no right to Pranava, and none has except the Brahmanas. Moreover, the Westerners are Mlechchhas [barbarians], not even Shudras!") During the remainder of this conversation, an account of which is given in volume five of the *Complete Works*, Swamiji explained to Mr. Sinha's satisfaction that true Brahmanahood was not a matter of birth but of a sattvika, or spiritual, quality of mind. "My disciples are all Brahmanas!" he declared.)

When we consider how many thousands of people Swamiji came in contact with throughout his tours in the Western world, the number of men and women he initiated does not seem large. But when we consider the number of Westerners

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

known to have been his disciples, then it seems large indeed, for we know of only a handful. The fact seems to be that there was a certain distinction, which Swamiji himself made, between his disciples. In Sister Christine's memoirs one reads: "Unless the desire for discipleship was definitely expressed, and unless he was convinced that the aspirant was ready for the step, he left the personal life of those around him untouched. . . . When speaking of some of those whom we did not know, he was careful to explain, 'He is not a disciple; he is a *friend*.' It was an altogether different relation. Friends might have obvious faults and prejudices. Friends might have a narrow outlook, might be quite conventional, but it was not for him to interfere. It seemed as if even an opinion where it touched the lives of others, was an unpardonable intrusion upon their privacy. But once having accepted him as their *guru*, all that was changed. He felt responsible. He deliberately attacked foibles, prejudices, valuations—in fact everything that went to make up the personal self."²

It was clearly this kind of discipleship to which Swamiji was referring when he was to say to a group who had gathered around him one balmy moonlight evening in Alameda, "If you want to be my disciples, you must face the cannon without a murmur."³ And one remembers that in 1897 when he was about to give initiation to the young man Saratchandra Chakravarty, he put to him a few pointed questions which bore upon discipleship of this type: "Well, are you ready to do my bidding to your utmost, whatever it be and whenever it may come? If I ask you to plunge into the Ganges or to jump from the roof of a house, meaning it all for your good, could you do even that without any hesitation? Just think of it even now, otherwise don't rush forward on the spur of the moment to accept me as your Guru."⁴

That was one kind of discipleship; and we know of only a few instances in which he bestowed it in the West. At Thousand Island Park he gave the final monastic vows to a man and a woman (who thereby became Swami Kripananda and Swami

Abhayananda) and the vows of brahmacharya—the first vows—to five others, one of whom was Christine Greenstidel (Sister Christine). According to Miss Ellen Waldo's memoirs, the remaining five students at Thousand Island Park (there had been twelve in all) took initiation in New York City, "together with several others of the Swami's disciples there."⁵ It was in February of 1896 that he gave these further initiations. In a letter to the *Brahmavadin*, Swami Kripananda reported that on Thursday, February 13, Swamiji had given sannyasa to a Dr. Street "in the presence of the other sannyasins and a number of brahmacharins," and that the following Thursday he gave *diksha*, or initiation with a mantra, to several young men and women.⁶ We know also that sometime during this same month he gave brahmacharya to Mr. J. J. Goodwin—"the shorthandist," as Swami Kripananda sometimes called him.⁷ These are the only instances of formal initiation given in the West by Swamiji that we know of. They took place with a simple ceremony in the presence of others; they were not all monastic initiations, but they all seem to have been given to people whom he expected to become dedicated workers, even teachers.

How many other people in the various places Swamiji visited, such as Boston, Detroit, Chicago, London, received a formal initiation from him, we do not know, but it would seem likely that there were some. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, for instance, became his disciples in London and gave themselves to his work. Sister Nivedita was, of course, a disciple in the most rigorous sense of the word, though her initiation took place not in the West but in India.

But it was not only disciples of this kind to whom Swamiji was referring when he spoke of having initiated more than three thousand Westerners—Brahmins all. There was the far larger group, or multitude, of "friends," to some of whom he had surely given informal initiation and whom he did indeed count among his disciples. As examples, one could cite Miss MacLeod and her friend Mrs. Dora Roethlisberger, who both, according

to Miss MacLeod's reminiscences, received spiritual instruction from Swamiji. "Meditate on the word 'Om' for a week and come again and tell me," he instructed them when they had asked him how to meditate. In a week they returned to report. "I see a light," Mrs. Roethlisberger told him. "Good," Swamiji said; "keep on." Miss MacLeod said her own experience was "more like a glow at the heart." To this Swamiji also said, "Good, keep on." "That is all he ever taught me," she wrote.⁸ But whether she knew it or not—and she did not know it, declaring always that she was not his disciple in any sense, but his friend—this from Swamiji was initiation.

To how many thousands of people Swamiji gave a similar informal, undeclared, and apparently casual initiation, we have no way of knowing. His "maybe more than [three thousand]" puts no ceiling on the number. And then, this kind of initiation was, one thinks, generally so lacking in any kind of ceremony or deliberation that often the recipient had not the faintest idea that he had received from Swamiji a blessing that was sufficient forever and that would eventually bear fruit as tangible as the *amalaka* in the hand.

It would seem that in giving informal initiation Swamiji seldom said anything about discipleship, its prerequisites and responsibilities. He gave his blessings, gave, perhaps, some spiritual instructions, took upon himself the burdens of those who had come to him, and went on his way, demanding nothing, neither obedience, acceptance of his teachings, nor loyalty. Not even an interview was necessary. With one penetrating look he could know all that was essential to know about any individual. Perhaps he did not even prescribe a mantra. Could he not, with a glance or a touch, transmit the spiritual impetus that would thenceforth work its miracle in the life of the recipient, carrying him quickly to liberation? "The human teacher," Sri Ramakrishna once said, "whispers the mantra in the ear of the disciple; the World Teacher puts it in his heart."⁹ In speaking of initiation with a mantra, Swamiji himself once said, "With great teachers the use of

words is not necessary—as with Jesus. But the ‘small fry’ transmit this current through words.”¹⁰ Needless to say, Swamiji was a World Teacher, a *jagadguru*; his was the power to transmit spiritual energy directly; this was, indeed, a vital part of his mission. “The touch of the Guru, the transmittal of spiritual energy, will quicken your heart,” he said during his lecture “Discipleship” in San Francisco. “Then will begin the growth. That is the real baptism by fire. No more stopping. You go on and go on.”¹¹ From Swamiji, the baptism by fire was sometimes as silent, as imperceptible, but as irreversible, as the first touch of spring.

One remembers those many people in the West whom he loved and who had served him, but to whom he does not seem to have given any formal initiation. To mention only a few, there were Professor John Henry Wright, the Hale and MacKindley sisters, Mrs. John Bagley, the Guernseys, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett, Dr. Lewis G. Janes, Mrs. Hansbrough, and her sisters. None of these people had become his disciples in the cannon-facing sense. But can we think that he did not take them into his protection once and for all, that he did not baptize them by fire, that he did not, in short, become their guru?

There were, then, disciples and disciples—some who understood their spiritual relationship with him, many more who did not; but all were his own. Was there a greater blessing given to the one than to the other? Who could know the answer to this? “There is no condition in grace,” Swamiji once said to his disciple Chakravarty. “It is as His play or sport. All this creation of the universe is like His play. ‘It is the pure delight of sport, as in the case of men.’ Is it not possible for Him who creates and destroys the universe as if in play to grant salvation by grace to the greatest sinner? But then it is just His pleasure, His play, to get somebody through the practice of spiritual discipline and somebody else without it.” “Sir,” the disciple said, “I can’t understand this.” “And you needn’t,” Swamiji replied.¹²

So if we ask if Swamiji made disciples in California, the answer I should think would be, in one sense, no; in another sense, yes. In the latter sense one might say that all the members of his Turk Street class—those with whom he meditated and to whom he gave a glimpse of superconsciousness that would ever after be pursued—were his disciples. That they may have been unaware of it made not the slightest difference.

19

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, Swamiji's daily routine in San Francisco was more or less the same as it had been in Pasadena. After lunch, on days when there had been a morning class and were to be no engagements in the early afternoon, he would take a nap for about two hours. (He always slept quietly, she said.) Later in the day he would perhaps hold an advanced class or give an interview or two. Or, if there was no afternoon class and no visitors, he would read, or study French, or talk casually to Mrs. Hansbrough and Mrs. Aspinall. "He was a great one to think out loud when he was at home," Mrs. Hansbrough said. "At least, one had the feeling that this is what he was doing. He liked a listener, however. He would ask us many questions about our family lives, and then would tell us about family life in India. . . . He always talked in a low tone of voice. Even in private conversation he was always a calm man—except [as she well knew] when he was giving someone a dressing down."¹

Sometimes he spoke of Sri Ramakrishna. "He always spoke of his Master as 'Atmaram,'" she said. "Whenever there were difficulties he would say, 'Well, if things do not go well, we will wake up Atmaram.'" Or sometimes he would speak intimately of himself and his mission. On a sheet of foolscap paper Mrs. Hansbrough later wrote out for the Allans the following deeply personal words, which surely Swamiji had spoken at a time when no strangers were present:

"The Mother dropped me in a strange world," he said,

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

"among a strange people who do not understand me and whom I do not understand. But the longer I stay here I have come to feel that some of the people in the West whom I have met belong to me, and they also are here to serve with me in the work assigned to me.

"There is none with whom I can speak of the Beloved, not one. You do not know, you cannot imagine the loneliness of it. This is how I felt in Chicago.

"I am here to serve the Mother and to give the message which I came into the world to give."

"He talked a great deal of the Divine Mother," Mrs. Hansbrough wrote on the same sheet of paper. "He said that She was the receptacle of every germ of religion, and that She was here as a form, but was not tied to that form. She had Her desires, he said, but they were related to people. She would reach for people, though they did not know it, and gradually She would draw them to Her."

Again, "'This world is a huge sore,' he said, 'and we are wounded with that deceitful soreness, that untruthfulness of the world's disease. We have that in ourselves and will not admit that we have it. We live to gloss it over and throw flowers over the wound to hide it from our eyes.'"

In a somewhat disconnected and enigmatic passage of her "Reminiscences," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled that Swamiji "said many seemingly contradictory things." "For example, he said of his lectures and work, 'I have been saying these things before, over and over again.' In the Turk Street flat one day he said, 'There is no Vivekananda,' and again, 'Do not ask these questions while you have this Maya mixed up with your understanding.'"

Swamiji's talks in the privacy of the flat were not all in the nature of thinking out loud, nor were they always calm. Mrs. Hansbrough, whom he still called Madam Moses, would sometimes argue with him, would persistently question something about the way he was handling the work, would perhaps handle it herself in a way not to his liking, or would fail to attend

to some detail. His work was not an ordinary work to be done in an ordinary way; nor, to his mind, was any work an ordinary work. Even in so small a matter as cleaning a bathtub, he demanded a certain elegance, one might say a certain reverence, of action.

"He often scolded me," Mrs. Hansbrough related. "He was constantly finding fault and sometimes he could be very rough. 'Mother brings me fools to work with,' he would say; or, 'I have to associate with fools!' This was his favorite word in his vocabulary of scolding."

Swamiji, however, varied his choice of words to suit the circumstances. "Going up the steps of a hall in San Francisco before one of his lectures," Mrs. Hansbrough recounted, "he asked me about something I had told him I was going to do. I had neglected to take care of it, and told him I had intended to do it, but had not. 'Your intentions are good,' he remarked, 'but how like devils you act!'"

Mrs. Hansbrough stood up to Swamiji's vocabulary of scolding with a staunchness and lack of complexity that he must have liked. "You have no reverence!" he once said to her; but this, in respect to himself, was as he wanted it. "Swamiji had such simplicity about him," she later told Miss Ansell, "he put one right on a level with himself."³ "Somehow," she recalled of his scoldings, "I never felt hurt. I would get angry and sometimes would walk out of the room, but usually I was able to hear him through. . . . Once in the Turk Street flat I was dusting after breakfast in the dining room. As I worked, Swamiji was talking about something. I don't remember now what it was or what answer I gave. But suddenly he exclaimed, 'You are a silly, brainless fool, that's what you are!' He continued to scold me heatedly until Mrs. Aspinall appeared, and he stopped. I said to him, 'Never mind Mrs. Aspinall, Swami; if you're not through, just keep right on!'"

"There was the other side, however," she continued. "Though he himself said, 'I never apologize,' he would nevertheless come after the scolding was over to find me, and he

would say in a voice so gentle and with a manner so cool that butter and honey wouldn't melt in his mouth, 'What are you doing?' It was clear that he was seeking to make amends for the scolding. He used to say, 'The people I love most, I scold most,' and I remember thinking he was making a poor kind of apology!

"And he could give credit, too, when he chose," she added. "On the evening we left the Turk Street flat to go to the Alameda Home of Truth, he was helping me on with my overcoat and remarked, 'Well, you have worked like a demon!' " And this, of course, Swamiji had appreciated all along. On March 17 he had written to Mrs. Leggett: "Mrs. Hansborough, the second of the three [Mead] sisters is here, and she is working, working, working—to help me. Lord bless their hearts. The three sisters are three angels, are they not? Seeing such souls here and there repays for all the nonsense of this life."⁴

Mrs. Hansbrough, in turn, knew that however hard Swamiji may have scolded, he was grace itself. "He would not have held onto me as he did if he had not been so gracious," she once said, recalling how she had often felt she must return to Pasadena to be with her small daughter Dorothy. "One day while we were in San Francisco," she related, "I finally decided that I was going back to Los Angeles. I chose the day and had all my bags packed, ready to leave for the train. All at once I heard a voice say, 'You can't go. You might just as well not try.' And for some reason I became completely exhausted—so exhausted that I had to lie down on the floor. I thought of getting some food, but I couldn't move. And I couldn't bear to look at the suitcases. So I had to make up my mind not to go. Swamiji had not said anything to me," she added. "I don't know whose was the voice I heard speaking to me."

In regard to Mrs. Hansbrough's attachment to her little daughter, however, Swamiji did indeed say something to her. Years later she wrote down his word for the Allans: "You think you love your child. That is not love at all! It is the same as a hen has for her chicken; she will scratch all day to get food

for her chicks, but let a strange chick come in and what will she do?"

Aside from being Swamiji's secretary and, with Mrs. Aspinall, his housekeeper, Mrs. Hansbrough was his press agent, treasurer, bookkeeper, and banker. From flat to lecture hall and back, and also, it would seem, at various other times, she would carry a "black case"—possibly a small suitcase—which held "my notebooks, advertising matter, the collection or ticket money, and other things connected with the work." Mrs. Hansbrough and her black case became a familiar, and according to one report, not always a fond sight to the members of Swamiji's audiences. "One woman," she said, "told someone that she did not like Swami Vivekananda because of the thin little woman who was always running along behind him with the black case." That was a pity; but an even greater disaster once nearly occurred in connection with the black case. "One day Swamiji and I stopped in a market to do some shopping," Mrs. Hansbrough recounted, "and when we had gone out I discovered I had left the case. I said, 'Just a minute, I forgot something,' and rushed back. There was the case, sitting on the counter. It had three hundred dollars in it!"

That three hundred dollars, which Mrs. Hansbrough was perhaps taking to the bank to have changed, as was her wont, into twenty-dollar gold pieces, would have represented more than the admission to one lecture-series plus the collection from a Sunday lecture—more than a long week's work—possibly more than two weeks' work. Swamiji charged nothing for his Turk Street classes, for there he gave spiritual instruction directly. He put his pay lectures in a different category. "Once after we had moved to the Turk Street flat," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "a woman said something to Swamiji about his teaching religion. He looked at her and replied, 'Madam, I am not teaching religion. I am selling my brain for money to help my people. If you get some benefit from it, that is good; but I am not teaching religion!' " Another time at the flat, Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, Mrs. Aspinall told him that he

really should not charge admission to his lectures. "God will provide," she said. "Madam," Swamiji answered, "God has made a mess of everything. I am trying to straighten it out."

20

Swamiji did not spend all his time in San Francisco in either his flat or a lecture hall. "When he had no class in the morning we would often go out during the day," Mrs. Hansbrough related. "He liked to go to market with me, and sometimes we would go out for lunch or go for a ride in Golden Gate Park, which he enjoyed." They went on other excursions as well, and generally would travel by cable car, by which one could reach almost any point in the city. "Swamiji would always sit very straight on the streetcar," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "with his hands one on top of the other on the walking stick he carried. He would often sing on the car in a low tone of voice."¹ To visualize Swamiji on a San Francisco streetcar, one should remember that more likely than not he would be wearing his black coat with its frog fastenings, a clerical collar, and a round black hat. One should also remember that in those days the streetcars had two long, varnished wood benches that, facing each other, ran the length of the enclosed part of the car. The cable cars were (and still are) also equipped with outside benches that faced the street, providing an unobstructed view of the passing scene. Sitting beside Swamiji would be Mrs. Hansbrough wearing in the fashion of the day a ground-sweeping skirt, fitted jacket, and a perky, perhaps feather-adorned, hat. At times she would have firmly in hand the black case.

Because of the ease with which Swamiji could get lost in a city or lose all track of time, he seldom went out alone. Another reason he liked company was that his dark skin and unusual dress were apt to excite violent expressions of hostility. Swamiji's early experience in America had taught him that the American was likely to attack anyone different from himself,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

anyone obviously a stranger. Particularly was this true of European immigrants of the lower classes, those who not long before had themselves been strangers in the land. But he had also found that no matter how rough and tough an American might be in defending himself and his country against a man in strange garb, he would never show disrespect to a woman.

"Swamiji spoke more than once of the indignities to which he had been subjected in the West," Mrs. Hansbrough once recalled. "It was because of the constant possibility of some unpleasant occurrence that he always preferred to have a woman escort. He said that people would respect the women where they would not respect him. Once in San Francisco when I was taking him somewhere into a rather rough part of the city on a call which escapes my memory now, some rowdies made slighting remarks about him which he overheard. He said nothing, but after we had gone he remarked, 'If you had not been along, they would have thrown things at me.'

"He mentioned that well-known incident in Chicago when a man came up and pulled his robe and asked him why he wore his nightgown in public. He was deeply offended by such rudeness on the part of the American public. 'A man could walk the length of India in any kind of dress and such a thing would not happen to him,' he said."

One of the places to which Swamiji may have sometimes gone alone, however, was Chinatown. He particularly liked to visit this quarter of the city, which in 1900 occupied some twelve square blocks on the lower eastern slope of Nob Hill and which was in many respects more genuinely Chinese than it is today. Architecturally, it is true, Chinatown consisted for the most part of old two- and three-story brick buildings, dismal, unlovely, and as Western as the Boston traders who had built them earlier in the century. But the Chinese who had taken them over had managed to put their own colorful and graceful stamp on this basic drabness. They painted the window-frames and doorjambs bright yellow, orange, crimson, or blue. They

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

filled the balconies and fire escapes with porcelain pots of China lilies; they hung huge, balloonlike lanterns everywhere, brightened the walls with bold red or black ideographs and made works of art out of their displays of goods. The streets were lively bazaars of sidewalk shops and stalls. There were markets with exotic vegetables, shark fins, ancient eggs encased in mud, birds' nests for soup, live, squawking fowl; there were sedately elegant shops where one could find exquisite works of art, and dignified chemist shops with tiered rows of red-lacquer boxes filled with medicinal herbs, dried sea horses, or powdered deer horn. Indoors or out, artisans—jewelers, lantern-makers, chair-caners, chandlers—plied their crafts in full view. There were many richly decorated temples or, as they were called, joss houses, where various minor gods and goddesses were worshiped and prayed to. There was a theater where stylized dramas went on interminably, and luxurious restaurants that served quantities of excellent and extraordinary food.

Despite the Exclusion Act of 1882, the district was still thickly populated, and this mostly by men from Canton who had come to America during the sixties and seventies, thinking to make their fortunes as laborers on the railroads. Men from a higher class had also come; but none, high or low, dreamed of adopting Western clothes or ways. Their blue denim or black alpaca trousers and jackets or their more elegant plum-colored coats of quilted silk, their broad-brimmed black felt fedoras or round skull caps from which would hang a long queue (or under which one would be coiled), added as much distinctive charm to the district as did their composed pursuit of ancient customs. The women whom one saw in the streets were mostly sturdy Cantonese serving women, wearing trousers and jackets; but now and then, supported by an attendant, a delicately formed lady of the upper classes—the wife perhaps of some rich merchant—would teeter along on tiny, deformed feet, carrying a sandalwood fan and wearing a gown of pastel silk, richly embroidered with a garden of color.

To the Western ear, eye, and mind, the district was a world

apart, and it was a world predominantly sinister—a world of eerie heathen rites, opium dens, traffic in slave girls, tong wars and assassinations, and imminent bubonic plague. This image of Chinatown was pleasurably tingling to the late-nineteenth-century spine, and most pleasurably tingling of all was the firm belief in the existence of a labyrinthine underground city, said to extend seven or eight levels below the street and to contain in its shadowy dens and twisting tunnels corresponding depths of evil.

The aura of mystery and lurking peril that made Chinatown a place of fascination for the average San Franciscan would, of course, have had no meaning for Swamiji. The Chinatown he saw and liked to visit was undoubtedly the Chinatown of a cheerful and reserved people, whose age-old traditions, customs, and modes of life would have deeply interested him, as did everything connected with mankind's endlessly inventive cultures. The Chinese were, in turn, fascinated by Swamiji. The import of his majestic walk and luminous glance would not have been lost on this ancient people: they no doubt recognized him as a holy man from India—a land revered by the Chinese for well over a thousand years for its religion and its sages. "They would just flock after him," Mrs. Hansbrough recounted, "'shaking themselves by the hand,' as the saying went, to express their pleasure at his presence."

Nothing remains of Chinatown as Swamiji saw it; it was totally destroyed by the disaster of 1906. Only the walls and granite steps of Old St. Mary's Church, which stood, as it stands today, at the south portal of the district, are substantially the same as they were—which is more than can be said of almost any other downtown San Francisco building that Swamiji might have passed by or entered.

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, another place Swamiji liked to visit was Golden Gate Park—the great park of San Francisco whose thousand or so acres form a rectangle three-quarters of a mile wide and over four miles long, running from the shore of

the Pacific to approximately the geographical center of the city. In 1900 the Park had by no means achieved its present forest-like luxury of growth. Its innumerable trees and bushes were still relatively short and slender, and from almost every point there were unobstructed views. But the Park's basic plan had long since been laid out, and many of its now famous features were in existence, such as the curving roads and bridle paths, the lakes, meadows, glades, and dells, the vast lawns and gardens where one was free to stroll, picnic, or nap. Also existing were the Japanese Tea Garden (not as large or ornamental as it is today), the great glass Conservatory (with its display of rare tropical plants and immense pond lilies), the sunken Music Concourse (still without its monumental bandstand), a museum (an Egyptian-style structure, since torn down), and a fairly large number of bronze statues of famous men. On the other hand, many landmarks that today seem primordial were not yet there: the big Dutch windmills near the ocean had not been built, the Aquarium did not exist, and the Academy of Sciences Museum was located far away on Market Street.

We have few details from Mrs. Hansbrough about Swamiji's drives and walks in Golden Gate Park and can only conjecture that he visited such places as the Japanese Tea Garden or the Conservatory; we know for certain, however, that he walked on the island of Strawberry Hill. One day when Mr. Aspinall had taken Swamiji, Mrs. Hansbrough, and Mrs. Aspinall for a carriage drive in the Park, they went to Stow Lake, where one could go boating or feed the swans and wild, quacking ducks. Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough strolled by the lake—which Mrs. Hansbrough mistook for "a rather swift stream"—and crossed a bridge to the island, where after a time they became lost. "When we had left the bridge some distance behind," she related, "and tried to discover some means of recrossing the stream, Swamiji had realized we were on an island, and without thinking to use just that word he tried to indicate the fact to me as he looked about for a means of crossing. Finally when he saw that I had neither caught his meaning nor

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

perceived that the land was an island he remarked, 'Well, Madam, I am glad I haven't your brain!' "

Swamiji also visited the Cliff House, going by means of a streetcar pulled along by a little steam engine through empty sand lots and dunes. The Cliff House, then a world-famous restaurant housed in a grandly spired, towered, and gabled seven-story wooden chateau, sat on the very edge of a cliff at the farthest end of the city. From here, as one ate lunch, one could have a wide view of the ocean and a close view of Seal Rocks, where the sea lions, then a populous and rambunctious herd, would bark, roar, and lumber about their spray-drenched domain.

Whether or not Swamiji liked the Cliff House, the sea lions, or the ocean with its long, open beach and charging, white-maned breakers, Mrs. Hansbrough does not say. No doubt he did; for he saw, certainly, exquisite and profound beauty in all nature. But, as he had remarked in Pasadena, man and his works interested him far more than "sights." Indeed, he seems to have cared little for places as such: no place was his home, and none was alien to him. "He seemed like a bird in flight," Mrs. Hansbrough later said. "He would stop here and there, with no great concern for liking or disliking the places where he stopped."

Because of Swamiji's general indifference to sightseeing as a pastime, it is probable that he did not go, if he could help it, on any of the then highly popular excursions around the Bay or down the Peninsula. But it was consistent with his interest in man that he did go to see a ship being launched at one of the city's shipyards.

Those who have read *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* will remember Ida Ansell's account of this occasion, which she, in turn, had heard from Mr. Allan. The story was, indeed, Mr. Allan's and one that he often repeated. Therefore I shall give it here as he himself gave it in the paper he read before the Vedanta Society in 1935. Mr. Allan, a marine engineer, was employed at the time as a draughtsman at the Risdon Iron

and Locomotive Works in San Francisco, which had to do with the building of ships; thus he had entrée to the shipyards of the Bay.

"One day," he related, "when the launching of a ship was mentioned during a conversation, Swami remarked that he had never seen a ship launched. There was to be a vessel launched in a few days from one of the big shipyards of San Francisco, and I was able to get passes for Swami and several others. When we got near the vessel, the Swami noticed the platform for the launching party, and realized that from there one could get the finest view of the proceedings. It was necessary, however, to have a special ticket in order to go on that platform, which was reserved for guests of the owners. There were two guards at the approach to the platform, whose duty was to prevent any unauthorized person from passing. Swamiji simply walked past these guards, who made no move to stop him."²

In one of her many letters to Swami Ashokananda, Miss Ansell adds a charming and somehow poignant incident to this story of the ship launching. It would seem that before Swamiji strode like a king onto the platform, he and Mr. Allan had gone aboard the ship itself, leaving the women of the party sitting on the dock. But Ida Ansell, who was young and no doubt eager to see the insides of a ship, followed haltingly after the two men. "Swamiji was so kind," she related in her letter "helping me over difficult places, till Mr. Allan said, 'This is no place for women,' and I returned to the dock where I belonged."³

Swamiji was evidently impressed with the launching: "It is like the birth of a child,"⁴ he said; and one wonders what ship it was that had so auspicious a birth, but there is no knowing for certain. The only report of a likely ship launching that can be found in the contemporary San Francisco newspapers, or elsewhere, is of a steam tug, said to be "sixty feet long and one of the finest craft that has been built for many a day." This splendid tug, whose name was not given in the newspapers, was launched at the Potrero docks (about two and a half miles

south of the Ferry Building) on Wednesday, March 14, and, it was said, was to pass its days in ocean fishing.⁵ This may not have been the ship whose birth Swamiji witnessed, but according to the available news reports, there was none other that could have been.

In addition to going out during the day when there was no morning or afternoon class, Swamiji went out for dinner on the rare evenings—generally Saturdays and Sundays—when there was no lecture. These dinings-out were not invariably successful. Once a Mr. Charles P. Neilson, a locally well-known artist who lived in Alameda, invited Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough (and perhaps the Aspinalls) to have dinner with him at one of the excellent restaurants in Chinatown. He had ordered the dinner in advance, and after his guests had been seated, the cook himself came from the kitchen to greet them. But no sooner did Swamiji see this cook than he knew he could not partake of any of the specially prepared delicacies. There was no help for it. "Of course we went home," Mrs. Hansbrough related. "Mr. Neilson was very disappointed because he knew the Chinese who owned the restaurant; but Swamiji later explained that it was because of the character of the cook that he was unable to eat the food.

"One other such occurrence took place when we had fried shrimps in a French restaurant," Mrs. Hansbrough continued. "When we got home Swamiji vomited his dinner. I said fried shrimps were always hard to digest and probably these were not good, but he insisted that it was the bad character of the cook that was responsible. 'I'm getting like the Old Man,' he said. 'I shall have to live in a glass cage.' " By "the Old Man" Swamiji meant, of course, Sri Ramakrishna, who, as is well known, could not eat or drink anything that had come in contact with an impure person. His body would simply reject it.

Happily, Mr. Neilson had other opportunities to entertain Swamiji; according to Mrs. Hansbrough, he was his host at dinner several times and once took him to an exhibition of his paintings at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art (then a branch

of the University of California) that was housed in that mammoth, many-roofed mansion atop Nob Hill where the Mark Hopkins Hotel now stands. It was perhaps on this occasion that Swamiji, surveying a painting of some corpulent monks, remarked jokingly (as Mr. Rhodehamel tells it), "Spiritual men are fat. See how fat I am!"⁶

Although Swamiji had dinner on occasion with Mr. Neilson and very likely with others, he lived as quietly as possible in San Francisco. We do not hear of receptions or social gatherings of any sort being held in his honor. If he was entertained formally at dinner or supper, this, as far as is known, was always in connection with his lectures, and it would appear from our present knowledge that he entirely escaped public and social lionization.

This does not mean, however, that he was not urged to visit here and there. We find that at some point during his stay in San Francisco he spent at least two days with a Dr. Albert D. Hiller, a surgeon and homeopathic physician whose home and offices were at 1011 Sutter Street, in a residential block between Larkin and Hyde. The information that Swamiji was Dr. Hiller's guest comes to us from the unpublished, book-length memoirs of Mrs. Clinton French, and from one of Swamiji's letters we can infer the approximate date of his visit, as well as learn something of the doctor himself, of whom Swamiji writes with great humor. Upon the enthusiastic advice of Miss MacLeod this unfortunate man had taken his invalid wife to Los Angeles so that she could receive the magnetic treatments of Mrs. Melton. An earlier letter of Swamiji's supplies us with the information that on March 15 the Hillers had returned from Los Angeles full of cheer. "They declare themselves very much helped by Mrs. Melton," he wrote to Mrs. Leggett. "Mrs. Hiller expects to get completely cured in a short time." But by the end of March Mrs. Hiller was considerably worse in health than before. "You ought to have seen [Dr. Hiller] the other morning and heard him too!" Swamiji wrote on April 1 to Mrs. Bull. "Mrs. Hiller, it appears, is many times worse for all

the rubbings given; and she is only a few bones; and, above all, the doctor had to spend 500 dollars in Los Angeles. That makes him feel very bad. . . . He is a German; he dances about, slaps his pockets and says, 'You can't have got the five hundred, both for this silly cure!' . . .

"The old doctor is now persuaded that some *devils* are misarranging his affairs of late," Swamiji continued. "He has counted on so much to have me as his guest, and his wife righted, but he had to run to Los Angeles and that upset the whole plan; and now, though he tries his best to get me in as his guest, I fight shy, not of him, but of his wife and sister-in-law. He is sure, 'Devils must be in it'; he has been a Theosophical student. I told him to write to Miss MacLeod to hunt up a devil-driver somewhere so that he might run with his wife and spend another five hundred! Doing good is not always smooth! . . . I sent in a Christian Science healer to Dr. Hiller as a make-up of Joe's misdemeanour, but his wife slammed the door in her face and would have nothing to do with queer healing."⁸

From the above it is evident that up to and including April 1 Swamiji had succeeded in resisting Dr. Hiller's pleas that he be his guest. But sometime thereafter, probably during the first part of the month, his heart gave in to the old German and, as the following account from Mrs. French's memoirs shows, he went to stay at his home:

During one part of his sojourn in San Francisco [Mrs. French wrote], Vivekananda was guest in the home of Dr. Hiller, possessor of a very valuable library including many rare Oriental works. The Doctor's wife long an invalid, her sister (Mrs. N——) gave up her own home to assume management of this household. A third sister, living in Alameda, I knew very well.

Boston born, pride rankled as she related to me: Oh yes, she had met Swami Vivekananda, had heard him speak; he was wonderful, etc.; but he did not have much respect for women! It seems she had crossed the Bay to

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

visit her sisters and on entering discovered Swami Vivekananda squatting on the floor in front of a bookcase, poring over a book. She spoke to him; but he did not rise to greet her, or even answer her.

Undoubtedly she misapprehended the intense abstraction, which his hosts had recognized and safeguarded. It was Dr. Hiller's concern for Swami Vivekananda's health under the heavy strain of constant lectures and classes that prompted him to take Swamiji away to his cabin in the Mt. Shasta region for a few days of complete rest.

Not only did Dr. Hiller welcome Vivekananda to his home, but Mrs. N—— (professedly an atheist) afterward told me that she loved Swamiji as a son; she took care of his room, his clothing, rendered other little services with her own hands, unwilling to commit these humble tasks to a servant.

Burned out, following the earthquake in 1906, Dr. Hiller soon retired from medical practice and devoted himself to study. The last one of this family quartette, who thus familiarly met Swamiji in 1900, had passed on before the close of the second decade.⁹

The impression given here by Mrs. French is that Swamiji spent many days in the San Francisco home of Dr. Hiller. It is doubtful, however, that this was the case. Mrs. Hansbrough makes no mention of this episode, which would lead one to believe that it was of short duration; in fact, Mrs. French is the only memoirist to mention Dr. Hiller at all. One finds, however, that both Mrs. Hansbrough and Mr. Allan note very briefly that Swamiji spent two days and one night in San Francisco with a Dr. *Miller*. Since we encounter this Dr. Miller nowhere else and know neither his first name nor his address, it is impossible to determine at present whether he was a separate person existing in his own right or whether he was Dr. Hiller mispronounced.

Serving to further tangle up Swamiji's doctor friends, Mrs.

Hansbrough mentioned that he visited the home of a doctor whose name she did not give at all. He may have been a third doctor; then again, he may have been Dr. Hiller or Dr. Miller or both. In any case, Swamiji's stay with him could not have lasted for more than twenty-four hours. Almost at once he sent out a call for help to Mrs. Hansbrough, as was his wont when caught in desperate straits.

"Invariably he either phoned or wrote me whenever he wanted to leave any place," she related. "For instance, in San Francisco he was the guest of some physician and had expected to stay for some time. But the very day he went to the doctor's home he either phoned or wrote me—I forget now which he did—to come for him. When I arrived, his hostess came in, introduced herself, and then withdrew again. Then Swamiji explained: 'The trouble is, she is not a lady: she doesn't know what to do with me!'"

In view of Swamiji's quiet, almost secluded life, one of the last people one would expect him to meet and come to know quite well was Mrs. Collis P. Huntington, the wife of one of the enormously wealthy "Big Four" of the Central Pacific Railroad, who reigned in a palatial Nob Hill mansion. "Someone introduced Mrs. Collis P. Huntington to him," Mrs. Hansbrough remarked offhandedly during the course of her "Reminiscences," "and she gave him six thousand dollars for Sister Nivedita's Girls' School."

The last part of this statement is not altogether correct. At the beginning of May, Swamiji wrote to Sister Nivedita, who was then in Chicago, "Mrs. C. P. Huntington, a very, very wealthy lady, who has helped me, came; wants to see and help you. She will be in New York by the first of June. Do not go away without seeing her. If I cannot come early enough, I will send you an introduction to her."¹⁰ Sister Nivedita did indeed meet Mrs. Huntington in New York—but of this more in a later chapter.

As was the case everywhere, Swamiji met people of all kinds in San Francisco, and, as was the case always, he was equally friendly to all. "He seemed to like all people," Mrs. Hansbrough

once said. "He was most compassionate; it seemed as if he never saw distinctions between people—almost as if he didn't see the difference between a duck and a man!" "He talked, acted and moved in such a way," she said at another time, "that it was clear he always saw everything imbued with God." Even from a lower point of view Swamiji taught compassion for all. How often did he not say: "We do not progress from error to truth, but from truth to truth"? "Thus we must see," he told Mr. Allan, "that none can be blamed for what they are doing, because they are, at this time, doing the best they can. If a child has an open razor don't try to take it from him, but give him a red apple or a brilliant toy, and he will drop the razor. But he who puts his hand in the fire will be burned; we learn only from experience."¹¹

One might go so far as to say that if Swamiji had any preference for one person over another, he preferred the sinner who was learning through experience to the self-righteous man who never stepped beyond the bounds of convention. "As far as we could understand," the Allans once said, "if there was anything Swamiji did not like it was a 'goody-goody' person. He had no use for such people. He would say, 'Do something even if it is bad; but do something! Everyone says, 'Be good, be good.' Why should I be good?'"¹²

During his stay at Turk Street—through most of March and the first week or so of April—Swamiji's health on the whole improved. "I work every day morning and evening," he wrote to Sister Nivedita around the end of March, "eat anything any hour—and go to bed at 12 p.m. in the night—but such fine sleep!! I never had such power of sleeping before!"¹³ "—and trudge all over the town!" he added in a letter to Miss MacLeod. "And get better too!"¹⁴ How many hours Swamiji actually slept he did not say; perhaps few, for throughout his life his habit was to sleep very little: deep in the night or in the early hours before dawn he would sit in meditation, his mind in those quiet, solitary times entering into the state most

natural to it. One is justified in supposing that such was the case at Turk Street, for while Swamiji did not write or, as far as we know, speak directly of his spiritual practices and experiences, there is much to indicate that during this period he was living on the verge of samadhi. His San Francisco lectures give us some insight into his state of mind, as do some of the things he is quoted as having said in conversation; but nothing is as revealing in this respect as his letters to those few people to whom he confided his personal thoughts—Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Bull, Josephine MacLeod, and Mary Hale. Reading his letters to these friends in chronological order, one finds a gradual crescendo of mood, from depression and nervousness in Los Angeles to a growing peace in San Francisco and on to a sort of ecstasy of transcendence in Alameda in the East Bay. It seems to have been toward the end of March in San Francisco that Swamiji definitely stepped, as it were, across a line into the last phase of his life.

"I am the infinite blue sky; the clouds may gather over me, but I am the same infinite blue," he wrote on March 25 to Sister Nivedita. "I am trying to get a taste of that peace which I know is my nature and everyone's nature. These tin-pots of bodies and foolish dreams of happiness and misery—what are they? My dreams are breaking. Om Tat Sat!"¹⁵ And to Mary Hale three days later, "I am attaining peace that passeth understanding, which is neither joy nor sorrow, but something above them both. Tell Mother [Mrs. Hale] that. My passing through the valley of death, physical, mental, last two years, has helped me in this. Now I am nearing that *Peace*, the eternal silence. Now I mean to see things as they are, everything in that peace, perfect in its way. 'He whose joy is only in himself, whose desires are only in himself, he has *learned* his lessons.' . . . 'Alone through eternity, because I was free, am free, and will remain free for ever.' This is Vedantism. I preached the theory so long, but oh, joy! Mary, my dear sister, I am realising it now every day. Yes, I am. 'I am free.' 'Alone, alone, I am the one without a second.'"¹⁶

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

The postscript to this last letter is equally ecstatic and even more indicative of his high state of consciousness. "Now I am going to be truly Vivekananda," he declared—and I quote from an early copy of the original letter, retaining, among other things, his spellings of "all" and "good" which were clearly in mimicry of the pronouncements then current in New Thought circles. "Did you ever enjoy evil! Ha! Ha! you silly girl—Awl is goood! Nonsense. Some good, some evil. I enjoy the good and I enjoy the evil. I was Jesus and I was Judas Iscariot; both my play, my fun... Ostrich method? Hide your heads in the sand and think there is nobody seeing you! Awl is goood! Be brave and face everything, come good, come evil, both welcome, both of you my play. I have no good to attain, no ideal to clinch up to, no ambition to fulfil; I, the diamond mine, am playing with pebbles, good and evil; good for you, evil, come; good for you, good, you come too. If the universe tumbles round my ears, what is that to me? I am Peace that passeth understanding; understanding only gives us good or evil. I am beyond, I am *peace*."

And again to Sister Nivedita on March 28, "... the seed must die underground to come up as the tree. The last two years were the underground rotting. I never had a struggle in the jaws of death, but it meant a tremendous upheaval of the whole life. One such brought me to Ramakrishna, another sent me to the U.S., this has been the greatest of all. It is gone—I am so calm that it astonishes me sometimes!!"¹⁷

It was in this mood—or, rather, in this state of being which no mood could disturb—that Swamiji lectured, held classes, and gave interviews in San Francisco, delivering his final and, as he was to say, his highest teachings.

21

In March and April all of Swamiji's evening lectures in San Francisco were given in the Red Mer's Building at 320 Post Street, which like Union Square Hall was in the center of town.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

To get there from Turk Street, he would have taken exactly the same route as he did on Sundays, except that at the intersection of Powell and Post he would have crossed to the north side of Post Street and walked half a block east instead of west. The Red Men's Building, which belonged to the Improved Order of Red Men, a secret society similar to Freemasonry, was a rather narrow, three-story building in the center of the block, facing Union Square. The street floor was given over to two or more shops; the third floor, as a large sign stretching across the top of the building proclaimed, was occupied by the Pacific Business College. Washington Hall was probably on the second floor, as, no doubt, was a smaller auditorium known as Social Hall, where Swamiji was to lecture once or twice and where the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, now named the Vedanta Society of Northern California, was to come into being.

Union Square, the famous park that fills a square block in the heart of downtown San Francisco, had the same dignified status in 1900 as it has today, but the surrounding scene was very different. The now venerable Saint Francis Hotel that faces the park on the west and that seems to have been there forever was in 1900 still nonexistent. The southern part of the block on which it now stands was occupied by the Calvary Presbyterian Church, a handsome stone building with a columned facade. (One can find the same church today on the corner of Fillmore and Jackson streets, to which spot it was moved stone by stone in October of 1900.) The northern part of the block was occupied by several low, nondescript buildings. Early photographs of the three other boundaries of Union Square show a scene as unrecognizable. For the most part the buildings were from three to five stories high and, except for the Pacific Union Club, a mammoth five-story structure with an ornamental dormer roof that stood on the northwest corner of Post and Stockton, were unprepossessing. As for Union Square itself, it was adorned by lawns, small trees, low shrubs, and a flagpole, which last, said to be "menacing to life and limb,"

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

was removed during the period Swamiji was lecturing at the Red Men's Building. (The Dewey Monument, a tall granite shaft topped by an arabesquing figure of Victory, today a long-familiar landmark, was not to replace the flag pole until two or three years later.) There were of course no automobiles on the streets; the sounds were of horses' hooves on cobble-stones, the hum and thwack of underground cables, and the joyful clankety-clink-clink of cable car bells. Except on Sundays, it was nighttime when Swamiji walked, or rode a cable, up the slope of Powell Street to Post. His lectures in Washington Hall (in the Red Men's Building) were scheduled to begin at eight o'clock, by which hour the March sun had long since set and the street lights been turned on.

The first series of three evening lectures that he gave after he had moved into the Turk Street flat and decided to remain awhile in San Francisco had the same title as the first series he had given in Los Angeles: "Applied Psychology." Individually, the lectures were entitled "The Mind: Its Powers and Possibilities," "Mind Culture," and "Concentration"—all clearly concerned with raja yoga. He delivered them on, respectively, the evenings of Tuesday, March 13, Thursday, March 15, and Friday, March 16.

The only lecture of this series of which we have a transcript is the last. But from Mr. Rhodehamel's memoirs as published in the *Life* one learns something about the first, which, in a sense, marked the opening of the most important period of Swamiji's work in the Bay Area. His previous lectures had been, as I have mentioned, more or less preliminary. His main work now began, and it began, so to speak, with a bang. He had promised that it would. "Tomorrow night," he had said at the conclusion of what must have been "The Way of Salvation" at Wendte Hall, "I shall lecture on 'The Mind: Its Powers and Possibilities.' Come to hear me. I have something to say to you. I shall do a little bomb-throwing." Here, according to Mr. Rhodehamel, he glanced smilingly over the audience, and then with a wave of his hand added, "Come on! It will do you good."¹

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

The following night there was barely standing room, and Swamiji kept his word. "Bombs were thrown, and he, of all people, knew how to throw them with telling effect," Mr. Rhodehamel reported. "In this lecture he devoted considerable time to the subject of chastity as a means of strengthening the mind. As a practice to develop purity, he expounded the theory of looking upon every woman as one's mother. When he had presented the idea, he paused and, as though in response to inarticulate questionings from the audience, said, 'Oh, yes, this is a theory. I stand up here to tell you about this beautiful theory; but when I think of my own mother I know that to me she is different to any other woman. There is a difference. We cannot deny it. But we see this difference because we think of ourselves as bodies. This theory is to be fully realised in meditation. These truths are first to be heard, then to be meditated upon.'

"He held purity to be for the householder as well as for the monk, and laid great stress on that point. 'The other day a young Hindu came to see me,' he said. 'He has been living in this country for about two years, and suffering from ill-health for some time. In the course of our talk, he said that the theory of chastity must be all wrong, because the doctors in this country had advised him against it. They told him that it was against the law of nature. I told him to go back to India, where he belonged, and to listen to the teachings of his ancestors, who had practised chastity for thousands of years.' Then turning a face puckered into an expression of unutterable disgust, he thundered, 'You doctors in this country who hold that chastity is against the laws of nature, don't know what you are talking about. You don't know the meaning of the word purity. You are beasts! beasts! I say, with the morals of a tomcat, if that is the best you have to say on that subject!' Here he glanced defiantly over the audience, challenging opposition by his very glance. No voice was raised, though there were several physicians present."² (And one fancies that in that silence there was many a blush among the maidens and matrons of the

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

audience, for this was 1900 when the words "sex" and, by association, "chastity" were still taboo. But Swamiji was in no way deceived by the hypocrisies of Victorian society. While he was well aware, as he was to say later on, that "public discussions of this subject were not to the taste of this country,"³ he said exactly what he wanted to say, when and where he wanted to say it.)

It should be noted that in her published memoirs Miss Ansell has related that this particular bomb was thrown during a lecture Swamiji gave at the California Street Home of Truth. But this recollection does not occur in her original, unpublished memoirs, written in 1946, and one is inclined to think that the account of Swamiji's words was borrowed, along with much else, from Mr. Rhodehamel.

But even Mr. Rhodehamel does not give a full picture of Swamiji's manner of berating his audience. One learns a little more about what must have been this same lecture from Miss Sarah Fox, whose recollections of her attendance at the Unitarian church in Oakland we have quoted earlier. "My sister and I heard only one other lecture by Swamiji," she added in her memoirs; "this time in San Francisco. In the first half of it he flayed his listeners for their licentiousness, and in the second half he poured out his affection upon them."⁴ Swamiji's profound, undeviating affection for man was always there. It was indeed this that made his insights so unerring, his chastisements so incisive. While truth was the dynamite of his bombs, it was his love that ignited them. Not everyone, however, could withstand them.

Mr. E. C. Brown, who was present at most of Swamiji's lectures in the Bay Area, later told of the astonished indignation with which some members of the audience became aware that his "bomb-throwing" was aimed at *them*. "Does he mean *me*?" was incredulously asked by more than one person. "Several people," Mr. Brown reported, "stopped coming to the lectures."⁵

This would not have troubled Swamiji in the slightest. He

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

well knew that those who were annoyed by his words today would feel blessed by them tomorrow. "I will compare truth to a corrosive substance of infinite power," he had written during his first visit to the West in an impassioned reply to some well-meant advice that he soften his approach. "It burns its way in wherever it falls—in soft substance sooner, hard granite later, but it must.... I have a message to give," he continued, "I have no time to be sweet to the world, and every attempt at sweetness makes one a hypocrite."⁶ In 1900 Swamiji was again receiving advice—notably from those who had not known him earlier. His answer was in essence no different, but it was the succinct answer now of a veteran warrior who had never compromised or turned his back, and whose truth had flooded the world—to burn its way in soon or late. Mrs. Hansbrough, it will be remembered, once ventured in Los Angeles to suggest that he sometimes antagonized his audiences, only to meet with the reply, "Madam, I have cleared whole halls in New York."⁷ Perhaps she brought up the point again in San Francisco. "Once while we were in the Turk Street apartment," she related, "I questioned something about the way Swamiji was handling the work. He did not answer, but simply said, 'Within ten years of my death, I will be worshiped as a god.'"⁸

While some people, their pride badly damaged, may have stopped coming to Swamiji's lectures, his following as a whole was to remain constant throughout his stay in San Francisco. As has been said earlier, the attendance at his pay lectures had at first been so unsatisfactory that he had felt it not worth his while to remain in California. But soon this situation changed. "The attendance averaged from one hundred and fifty to two hundred," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "which was not bad, considering that there was a charge of fifty cents for each lecture and one dollar for a series of three."⁹

By a stroke of good fortune, there was no lack of advertising for these later lectures. Among the people who were attracted to Swamiji from the beginning was Mrs. Clinton French, the wife of the printer who some thirteen years later was to save

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

the notes of the Turk Street classes from oblivion. In the early part of 1900, Cara French, like Ida Ansell, had been attending a class on the Gita held by Miss Lydia Bell at the California Street Home of Truth. She had drifted there, she recounted in her unpublished memoirs, for lack of an anchor and because "of the keen interest of several relatives in Home of Truth teachings." "Then," she wrote, giving the sentence a paragraph of its own, "came VIVEKANANDA!" "A prolonged illness of Mr. French, with consequent financial strain, hampered me," she continued; "but so intense was my desire to attend Swami Vivekananda's lectures and classes, the way seemed to open. Mrs. Hansbrough and others in charge needed advertising matter: we had a printing shop. So through Mr. Wiseman, caretaker at the [California Street] Home of Truth, a mutually favorable arrangement was made. Copy with the cuts of Swamiji reached our desk; and presently they had dodgers (small handbills), quarter-cards (for window display), and tickets—and I the coveted admissions to his courses of lectures."¹⁰

This arrangement was a godsend for all concerned. Because of her husband's illness, Mrs. French did a good deal of the printing work herself and thereby not only received free admission to Swamiji's lectures (together, surely, with the cost of printing) but, as she often said in later years, derived much happiness from the work itself. As for Swamiji, the San Francisco newspapers did not often mention his lectures; advertising was expensive; and, as we have seen, the Reverend B. Fay Mills had declined to announce his lectures to his own San Francisco congregations. Dodgers and quarter-cards were just the thing. Evidently a great many of the latter were placed in strategic windows about the city to announce each lecture series; for one remembers Miss Partington's mention (in the *Chronicle* of March 18) of a photograph or "cut" which "has been extensively used in lecture advertisements here." But of the handbills, display cards, and tickets turned out by the Frenches' press (then located in the Phelan Building at Market and O'Farrell) only a few handbills have been recovered.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Mrs. French's memoirs, incidentally, are revealing of the awe-inspiring effect Swamiji had upon some of his listeners. Although she attended all his lectures and his classes as well, although she was happy in serving his cause, she "had no personal conversation with him." "With abundant opportunity, it was my own fault that I did not," she wrote. "Others crowded about him with questions or in greeting; I slipped out quietly, even from the small classes held at the Turk Street flat, where I was obliged to pass around him to reach the stairway in leaving. There were several reasons for my attitude," she continued; "young [then in her late twenties] and naturally shy, I felt utterly insignificant, and wondered what I was doing in being there. Captivated by the spiritual force and magnetism of his presence, yet in a degree resisting it—for was he not bowling over or knocking to pieces many a preconceived idea of spiritual teaching—my mind was dazed and in a turmoil. However, I do not now regard it as an altogether lost opportunity. No one squatting on the floor Oriental fashion (for lack of sufficient chairs) just a few feet from Swami Vivekananda, could possibly have escaped his observation; his mental, moral and spiritual appraisal."¹¹ Indeed not, and in any event Mrs. French was captivated for good; she spent the rest of her life—she lived to be over eighty—in the study and service of Vedānta.

We know nothing of Swamiji's second lecture in the series on "Applied Psychology" except its title, "Mind Culture." During the third lecture, however, Ida Ansell took shorthand notes (for the first time), and we are fortunate enough to have her transcripts, the second of which has been published in volume four of the *Complete Works*. Miss Ansell's notes of this lecture were particularly scrappy; for when she took them down Swamiji's ideas were still more or less new to her, as was the rich, cascading flow of his language.

Yet from her transcript one can follow the gist of his talk. He outlined the essential steps of raja yoga, stressing the central

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

practice of concentration, without which no knowledge, either secular or spiritual, can be obtained. "The subject of the present lecture," he said near the beginning, "is how to concentrate the mind in order to study the mind itself. Yogis have laid down certain rules, and this night I am going to give you a sketch of some of these rules." He went on to speak of the prime necessity of perfect morality—inner morality, not the observance of outward forms. "External purity is very easy and all the world rushes toward it," he said, "... any fool can do that. When it is grappling with the mind itself, it is hard work. . . . It is culture of the heart that we want."¹² He then spoke of some of the steps in the actual practice of raja yoga—posture, breathing, concentration. He digressed to denounce hatha yoga, whose goal was longevity and which, generally speaking, was the West's only idea of yoga—and a vague idea at that. Returning to the practice of raja yoga—the practice of mental control—he concluded (and I quote here from the first transcript), "Then comes meditation. That is the highest state. . . . Meditation is practiced, and through meditation comes direct superconsciousness. By proper concentration the soul becomes entirely free from the bonds of the gross body and knows itself as it is. Whatever one wants, that comes to him. Power and knowledge are already there. The soul identifies itself with that which is powerless—matter—and thus weeps. It identifies itself with the mortal and weeps because it is mortal. . . . He who has become God—there is nothing impossible to such a free soul. No more birth and death for him. He has become free forever."¹³

It is evident from Ida Ansell's first transcript that during the course of this lecture Swamiji recounted the extraordinary and elaborate practices of the hatha yogis in considerable detail. "He puts a long stick down his throat and pumps it up and down," he said in part. "Puts a thread through one nostril and brings it out through the other. Some of the hatha yogis try to arrive at a sort of trance. They turn the tip of the tongue back and [attain a trancelike state], and in that trance they remain for days. Days after he will come out, quite alive. What more

immortality do you want!... These ideas, I have told you, have ruined races."¹⁴

Swamiji also told more stories in this lecture than the second transcript indicates. Apart from the story of Pavhari Baba, there was, Miss Ansell noted parenthetically, a "Story of the Sage in the Forest" and a "Story of a Girl." One finds scattered throughout the first transcripts many such titles in parentheses. "Swamiji always told some story on the lecture platform," Mrs. Hansbrough once recounted. "He said he gathered his mind in this way."¹⁵ Certainly he gathered the mind of his audience in this way, or relaxed the minds too highly strung. Ida Ansell never took his stories down, and this for the very reason that his manner of telling them was so enthralling.

One misses not only Swamiji's stories in the transcripts but also the wonderful play that would go on between him and his listeners. No transcript, however complete, could capture the subtlety of his humor, his teasing, his pauses that held a wealth of meaning, his inflections, gestures, and facial expressions, all of which could bring about gasps, laughter, even delighted applause. All are lost to us in the written word.

At one point in this lecture on "Concentration," for instance, Swamiji had his listeners in a state of suspense as he teased them in regard to his age. In the first transcript one finds this odd sentence: "I am only a few years"—a sentence meaningless if one does not know what was taking place. In his memoirs Mr. Rhodhamel recalled the incident: "Much conjecture was rife as to his age. He must have known this, for he availed himself of an opportunity to have a little fun on this point at the expense of the audience. Alluding to his own age, which was apropos of the subject, he said, 'I am only—' (breathless pause, anticipation) '—of a few years,' he added mischievously. A sigh of disappointment ran over the audience. The Swami looked on waiting for the applause, which he knew was ready to break out."¹⁶ And, no doubt, break out it did. To judge from various newspaper reports, applause was always breaking out during Swamiji's lectures; and, to judge from Mr.

Rhodehamel's memoirs, so was laughter, including Swamiji's own. His lectures seem to have been, in fact, veritable festivals.

Indeed, Swamiji's wit, his vibrant life, his many-faceted attractiveness—all luminous with the quality Miss Albers referred to as "soul-force"—made as deep an impression upon his audience as his words. Even his physical appearance was arresting. After two years or more of unremitting illness, work, and anguish of heart, he was evidently as strikingly handsome as he had been during his first visit to the West. "The beauty of Swamiji nobody can imagine," Mrs. Allan once said. "His face, his hands, his feet, all were beautiful. Swami Trigunatita later said that Swamiji's hands were far more beautiful than any woman's. His color would seem to change, some days being darker and some days lighter, but usually there was about it what can best be described as a golden glow."¹⁷ On the platform, wearing his robe—its shade described once as "persimmonish terra-cotta," once as "crushed strawberry"—his appearance was godlike, and to some, as Miss Ansell recalled, it appealed more than did his doctrine. "I remember," she wrote with a touch of disapproval, "one very wealthy and aristocratic young lady, who was studying music with my teacher, saying ecstatically, 'Oh, he is like a lovely golden statue!'"¹⁸ But one cannot blame the young woman for admiring this aspect of Swamiji. Most people did—men and women alike. "The Swami's personality impressed itself on the mind with visual intensity," Mr. Rhodehamel was to write some ten years later. "The speaking eyes, the wealth of facial expression and gesticulation; the wondrous Sanskrit chanting, sonorous, melodious, impressing one with the sense of mystic potency; the translations following in smiling confidence,—all these set off by the spectacular apparel of the Hindu Sannyasin,—who can forget them?"¹⁹

During his first visit to the West Swamiji's voice was often described as sheer music. It was still thrilling to his listeners. "His voice was so magnificent!" Mrs. Roorbach once recalled. "It would roll out with those Sanskrit verses and everyone in

the audience would sit up and take notice. They didn't know a word of Sanskrit; I didn't either. His voice was not tenor," she added, "but bass—low bass."²⁰ As far as I know, no one else ever described Swamiji's voice as "low bass," but if even one person remembered it as such, it must have been in the lower ranges. Mrs. Hansbrough confirmed this. "His voice was the most musical I have ever heard,"²¹ she said of his lectures in Los Angeles, and she had judged his pitch to be closer to bass than to tenor. "It was not a powerful voice," she recalled at another time, "but it had great depth. The manager of Washington Hall in San Francisco once told me he had never heard so sweet a voice."²² If his voice was not powerful, it was clear and carrying. "There was never any doubt about hearing what Swamiji said," Mrs. Allan once told a fellow Vedantin. "He spoke out very decidedly and very loudly. He used quite long sentences,"²³ she added.

Everything about Swamiji was expressive of the greatness of his personality, and that personality was as startling a revelation to his listeners as were his teachings. One recalls here a passage from Sister Christine's reminiscences: "Our conception of spirituality was not only clarified [through knowing Swamiji]," she wrote, "but transcended. Spirituality brings life, power, joy, fire, glow, enthusiasm—all the beautiful and positive things, never inertia, dullness, weakness. Then why should one have been so surprised to find a man of God with a power in an unusual degree? Why have we in the West always associated emaciation and anaemic weakness with spirituality? Looking back upon it now one wonders how one could ever have been so illogical. Spirit is life, *shakti*, the divine energy."²⁴ It was precisely this truth that Swamiji made apparent. The incomparable attractiveness of God as seen through him was ever a source of amazement in the West, and it was one of the most important lessons he taught—simply by his presence. But the divine energy he manifested also made of his every word a thunderbolt, and perhaps no one knew this better than he.

"One evening after one of his lectures at Washington Hall

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

several of us were walking home with him," Mrs. Hansbrough related. "I was in front with someone, and he behind with some others. Apropos of something he had been discussing, he said, 'You have heard that Christ said, "My words are spirit and they are life."' He pointed his finger at me and declared, 'So are my words spirit and life; they will burn their way into your brain and you will never get away from them!' "25

22

From the rough drafts of Mrs. Allan's memoirs one learns that during the question and answer period following Swamiji's lecture on "Concentration" someone in the audience requested that he speak on philosophy in his next series. A murmur of agreement arose from the audience. "So you want philosophy," Swamiji replied. "Then you must be prepared for cannon balls." "We got them," Mrs. Allan added.¹

Two days later, the San Francisco newspapers carried small advertisements that read:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA...will give a course of three lectures on "The Vedanta Philosophy" ["Vedlinta Philosophy" in the *Examiner*; "Vedonta Philosophy" in the *Chronicle*], at Washington Hall, 320 Post st. Subjects: Tuesday, March 20th, 8 p.m., "Nature and Man"; Friday, March 23rd, 8 p.m., "Soul and God"; Tuesday, March 27th, 8 p.m., "The Goal". Tickets, 50c; course, \$1.00.

Of these three lectures the only one that the newspapers later commented upon was the first. On March 21 the *San Francisco Call* produced the following:

Vedantic Philosophy

Swami Vivekananda the Hindoo exponent of the Vedantic school of philosophy delivered last evening the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

first of a series of lectures upon the elements of the system he represents. It was an abstruse treatise on the origin of the species and the development of the human mind....

It was, it so happens, no such thing. One cannot be grateful enough that by the time Swamiji gave his series on Vedanta Philosophy Ida Ansell was busy with her pencil. Her transcripts of the three lectures have been published in the *Complete Works*: "Nature and Man" in volume eight under the title "I Am that I Am"; "Soul and God" in volume one; and "The Goal" in volume two. (The first is among those edited from the first transcripts and published in *The Voice of India*.) True to his word, Swamiji bombarded the audience. His stress on monism, so pronounced during his second visit to the West, reached in this series a climax of explicit and impassioned expression; cannon balls flew to right and to left. "Audiences were jolted out of hereditary ruts, and New Thought students, so-called, were subjected to scathing, though constructive criticisms without mercy," Mr. Rhodhamel wrote in his memoirs. "Smilingly, [the Swami] would announce the most stupendous Vedantic conceptions so opposed to Christian theologic dogma; then pause an instant,—how many, many times, and with such winsome effect!—with his teeth pressed over his lower lip as though with bated breath observing the result."² To judge from the examples Mr. Rhodhamel proceeded to give of "the violence done to the traditional teachings of Christendom," he had particularly in mind this series on Vedanta Philosophy; all the concepts he cited can be found here, and many more besides.

The series started out quietly enough. In "Nature and Man" Swamiji gave a clear, concise explanation of the essential teachings of Advaita Vedanta by contrasting nature—both external and internal phenomena, both matter and mind, changing, mortal, and bound—with the substance or noumenon, the free, immortal, ^{un}unchanging, and infinite Self. "That substance—the soul—as it were moulds itself," he said, "as it were

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

throws itself into the cast of name and form, and immediately becomes bound, whereas it was free before. And yet its original nature is still there. That is why it says, 'I am free; in spite of all this bondage I am free.' And it never forgets this.... The awakening of the soul to its bondage and its effort to stand up and assert itself—this is called life. Success in this struggle is called evolution. The eventual triumph, when all the slavery is blown away, is called salvation, Nirvana, freedom. Everything in the universe is struggling for liberty. When I am bound by nature, by name and form, by time, space, and causality, I do not know what I truly am. But even in this bondage my real Self is not completely lost. I strain against the bonds; one by one they break, and I become conscious of my innate grandeur. Then comes complete liberation. I attain to the clearest and fullest consciousness of myself—I know that I am the infinite spirit, the master of nature, not its slave. Beyond all differentiation and combination, beyond space, time, and causation, I am that I am."³ (The title given to this lecture in *The Voice of India* and subsequently in the *Complete Works* was, of course, taken from those last resounding words, with which he concluded.)

In "Soul and God" and "The Goal" Swamiji left no question as to the implications of the philosophy he had expounded—what it demanded of those who could follow it; what it demanded, indeed, of all men worthy of the name Man. "Do not say God, do not say Thou, say I," he thundered toward the close of "Soul and God." (I quote from the typescripts of the first transcriptions.) "The language of materialism says God, Thou, my Father. The language of the spirit says, dearer unto me than I am myself. I would have no name for Thee. The nearest I can use is I. God is true, the universe is a dream. Blessed am I that I know this moment that I shall be free all eternity, that I know that I am worshipping only myself, that no nature, no delusion has any hold on me. Vanish nature from me. Vanish these gods. Vanish worship. Vanish all creeds and ceremonies. Vanish superstitions. For I know myself. I am

the Infinite.... How can there be death for me, or birth? Whom shall I fear? I am the One.... I am everything. I am God.”⁴

In “The Goal” Swamiji continued to blast concepts dear to Christian thought—new as well as old. “You are a slave,” he cried. “You never do anything of your own will because you are *forced* to do everything. Your only motive for action is some force.... Throughout nature, everything is bound. Slavery, slavery! To be in harmony with nature is [slavery]. What is there in being the slave of nature and living in a golden cage?” He crumpled up the idea that God had created the world for some purpose of His own and threw it aside. “[You say] God is free. Again you ask the question why God creates the world. You contradict yourself. The meaning of God is entirely free will. The question put in logical language is this: What forced Him, who can never be forced by anybody, to create the world?... The question is nonsense. He is infinite by His very nature; He is free. We shall answer questions when you can ask them in logical language. Reason will tell you that there is only one Reality, nothing else.”⁵

(In volume six of the *Complete Works* one finds some brief, undated notes entitled “The Goal,” which very possibly are excerpts from the San Francisco lecture, taken down by someone other than Ida Ansell. Here one finds the same subject dealt with in somewhat different words: “Such questions as, ‘Why did God create the universe?’ ‘Why did the All-perfect create the imperfect?’ etc., can never be answered, because such questions are logical absurdities. Reason exists in nature; beyond nature it has no existence. God is omnipotent, hence to ask why He did so and so, is to limit Him; for it implies that there is a purpose in His creating the universe. If He has a purpose, it must be a means to an end, and this would mean that He could not have the end without the means. The questions, why and wherefore, can only be asked of something which depends upon something else.”)⁶

Even as God has no purpose, neither in reality has man.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

"You are infinite; God is infinite. You are all infinite," Swamiji said. "There cannot be two existences, only one. The Infinite can never be made finite. You are never bound. That is all. You are free already. You have reached the goal—all there is to reach. Never allow the mind to think that you have not reached the goal. . . . It is all play. You may say, 'We have to do something; let us do good.' Who cares for good and evil? Play! God Almighty plays. That is all. You are the almighty God playing. . . . It is all fun. Know it and play. That is all there is to it. Then practise it. The whole universe is a vast play. All is good because all is fun. This star comes and crashes with our earth, and we are all dead. That too is fun. You only think fun the little things that delight your senses! . . . Who is born and who dies? You are having fun, playing with worlds and all that. . . . The Infinite is the real; the finite is the play. You are the infinite body and the finite body in one. Know it! . . . Know that you are always free. The fire of knowledge burns down all the impurities and limitations. I am that Infinite."7

What will become of one's individuality? Swamiji answered this objection often, not only in his lectures themselves but after them as well. "In the questions which usually followed a talk on [Advaita Vedanta]," Mr. Rhodehamel recalled, "there was almost sure to be the question, 'But, Swami, what will become of one's individuality when one realises one's oneness with God?' He would laugh at this question, and playfully ridicule it. He would say: 'You people in this country are so afraid of losing your in-di-vid-u-al-i-ties,' drawling out the word in laughing mockery. 'Why, you are not individuals yet. When you know God you will be. When you realise your whole nature, you will attain your true individualities, not before. In knowing God you cannot lose anything worth having.' "8

Swamiji shooed his alarmed listeners out of the churches. "No church ever saved by itself," he cried at the close of "The Goal." "It is good to be born in a temple, but woe unto the person who dies in a temple or church. Out of it! It was a good

beginning, but leave it! It was the childhood place but let it be! Go to God directly." And to those who indulged in bemoaning their sins he cried, "Don't repent!" "Do not be miserable! Do not repent! What is done is done. . . . Be sensible. We make mistakes; what of that? That is all in fun. They go so crazy over their past sins, moaning and weeping and all that. Do not repent! After having done work, do not think of it. Go on! Stop not! Don't look back! What will you gain by looking back? You lose nothing, gain nothing. You are not going to be melted like butter. Heavens and hells and incarnations—all nonsense!"⁹

This was a religion for heroes: no heaven, no hell, no incarnations, no worship, no doctrines, no churches, no external God, not even any beating of the chest. If Swamiji had thought none could follow it, he would not have preached it; yet he knew it demanded intense effort. "This is the religion of philosophy," he said toward the end of "Soul and God." "Difficult? Struggle on! Down with all superstitions! Neither teachers nor scriptures nor gods! Down with temples, with priests, with gods, with incarnations, with God Himself! I am all the God that ever existed. There, stand up, philosophers. No fear! Speak no more of God and superstitions of the world. Truth alone triumphs and this is true. I am the Infinite."¹⁰ He left man no quarter; he challenged him, as undoubtedly the coming centuries will themselves challenge him, to stand up alone to the full glory of his own infinitude.

The concepts Swamiji presented are startling today; in 1900 they were thunderclaps, and delivered by him, propelled by the incredible force of his personality, they could be profoundly unsettling. His words were not mere words; they were experiences, cutting new pathways in the mind. Many people, like Mrs. French, tried to resist, yet despite themselves were drawn deeper and deeper into the world of light Swamiji was opening to them. "[Their] powers of resistance," Mr. Rhodhamel observed, "were neutralised by the irresistible logic, acumen and childlike simplicity of the Great Teacher. Indeed,

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

there were a few who arose to demur but who resumed their seats either in smiling acquiescence or in bewildered impotency."¹¹ As far as is known, only one crusty soul had the courage, of sorts, to leave the hall. "On [one] occasion while he was expounding Advaita," Mr. Rhodehamel recounted, "an old man sitting in the front row, arose deliberately, and with a look which said as plainly as words, 'Let me get out of this place in a hurry,' hobbled down the aisle and out of the hall, pounding the floor with his cane at every step. The Swami apparently enjoyed the situation, for amusement overspread his features as he paused to watch him. The attention of the audience was divided between the Swami, smiling, fun-loving, and the disgusted old man who had had enough of him."¹²

But that old man, stomping and grumbling his way out, was a rarity; others sat spellbound. It is true that Swamiji had written to Mrs. Bull from southern California, "I cannot any more *tell* from the platform";¹³ and toward the beginning of his stay in San Francisco, "Platform work is nigh gone for me."¹⁴ And, to be sure, the years of intensive, "cyclonic" public work were indeed gone for him, or, rather, he had withdrawn from them, their purpose served. But there is no indication that the power he could project from the platform had in any way diminished. With a single sentence he could electrify a hall. "Once before beginning his lecture," Mrs. Allan related, "he looked out at the audience for a moment and then said: 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached!' It was like an electric shock! Marvellous!"¹⁵

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, who had, of course, heard Swamiji lecture in both southern and northern California, he "showed greater power in San Francisco than in Los Angeles."¹⁶ Perhaps this was because his health, for a time at least, was better in northern California, his mind more free from anxiety; perhaps it was because his audiences in San Francisco were more sophisticated and more responsive than those in southern California (in Pasadena his listeners had not wanted to hear

philosophy; in San Francisco they asked for it, and they asked for a class in practical instruction as well); perhaps it was for reasons too subtle to be so easily explained. Mrs. Hansbrough, in any event, told the facts as she saw them. "He seemed to get greater satisfaction from his work here," she said. "He thought that he got a better response here than he did in Los Angeles. And he was much more jolly in San Francisco. He could see the end of his work after he had come here."¹⁷

After a spiritual feast, a worship, or religious discourse, it is, I have been told, the custom in Bengal (as it is the custom in the West after some cultural event—the opera or theater, for instance) to serve a delicious repast, "to sweeten the mouth," as the saying goes. After food for the spirit, comes food for the body. Perhaps thinking of this, perhaps also wanting to express his gratitude for those who had helped him, Swamiji would sometimes treat a few members of his audience; they, in turn, would sometimes treat him. But this was not only a matter of custom; there was practical necessity as well.

"Swamiji never ate dinner before a lecture," Mrs. Hansbrough related; "he said it slowed his thinking."¹⁸ Thus he was ready for supper when his lecture was over. "Usually," Miss Ansell writes, "...some of the devotees would take him either to Mr. Louis Juhl's restaurant in the section of San Francisco known as Little Italy or to some uptown café, depending on whether his mood and the weather called for hot food or ice-cream."¹⁹ Mr. Louis Martin Juhl, an elderly German, whom we shall meet again later on, was a member of the California Street Home of Truth and a follower of Miss Lydia Bell. His restaurant stood at 533 Broadway (across the street from the County Jail, a notable landmark of the era), where Columbus Avenue (then Montgomery Avenue) diagonally intersects the block between Kearny Street and Grant Avenue (then Dupont Street). This location, on the south edge of North Beach (a district lying in the valley between Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill) and in the center of the Latin

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Quarter, was then a convivial meeting point of many nationalities—Italian, Spanish, Mexican, Basque, German, and some Chinese. When Swamiji and his friends went to Mr. Juhl's restaurant from the Red Men's Building they could take the little Powell Street cable car that rattled and clanged over Nob Hill to land in the Latin Quarter not far from where they wanted to go; or, as an alternate and perhaps more sensible route, they could take a cable car at Stockton and Geary streets, and, after winding awhile through the dimly lit and silent business district, get off at Dupont and Broadway, just a few steps from the restaurant.

Since Swamiji sometimes preferred ice cream to a hot supper, one might think that the San Francisco nights were sometimes balmy in March or early April. It was not so; the evenings were never warm, and more often than not a chill, penetrating north wind would blow and the temperature would fall to the low fifties. Mr. Rhodehamel recounts that after a lecture during which Swamiji had spoken of the various types of hells in different religions (the Hindu hells far outclassing Dante's *Inferno*), he emerged from the overheated hall into the bitter wind and, gathering his coat tightly about him, said vehemently, "Well, if *this* isn't hell, I don't know what is!"²⁰ But Swamiji liked ice cream; thus, whatever the weather, he would sometimes choose to go to an ice cream parlor rather than to Mr. Juhl's. "One evening after a lecture," Miss Ansell relates in her memoirs (and I quote here from her first or original version), "a few of us, with Swami, stopped on the way home to have refreshments. It was very cold, but we ate ice cream. We had to wait for one of the party to attend to something, I have forgotten what, but I remember Swami's admonition, 'Don't be long, or you will find only a lump of chocolate ice cream when you return!'"²¹

The Allans used to tell of an incident that took place at an ice cream parlor on Powell Street, which Mrs. Allan once described as "an old established store." (This was the parlor, probably, that Swamiji most often went to after his evening

lectures, for it would have been directly on his way home, but research has failed to turn up its name and exact location. The only "old established" ice cream parlor that stands today on Powell Street was not there until long after 1900.) Both Mrs. Allan and Ida Ansell have related the following story in their published reminiscences, but the most authentic, complete, and plausible version seems to be one found among the unpublished papers of Mr. Allan. Indeed, like the story of the ship-launching, this was *his* story, and I shall give it here as he told it:

"One evening after the lecture," he wrote, "Swamiji invited eight of us [not ten or twelve] to have ice cream with him, and we were a merry throng that walked with him down Powell Street. In that party there was—in addition to Swamiji—Mrs. Hansbrough, Mrs. Emily Aspinall, Mrs. Eloise Roorbach, George Roorbach, Eric F. A. Julihn, Miss Fanny Gould, Viraja [Mrs. Allan], Ajoy [Mr. Allan]. As we were walking along, Swamiji seemed to one lady [Mrs. Allan] to become very tall, while the rest of us appeared as pigmies. When we got to the parlor we all ordered "Ice Cream," but the waitress brought nine ice-cream sodas, which none of us liked, least of all Swamiji. When the error was pointed out the waitress said she would change the sodas for ice cream and was on her way to do so when the manager of the store, who had observed what had taken place, stopped her and began to speak crossly to her. Noticing this, Swamiji at once called out: 'Don't scold that poor girl! If you do I will eat all those ice-cream sodas myself!'"²²

The story does not go on to show us Swamiji blissfully eating the ice cream he had ordered. But we know from Mrs. Allan that on one such occasion he turned to her and said, "Food for the gods, madam, food for the gods."²³

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

at once returned to the subject of raja yoga. Under "Church Notices" the San Francisco papers of March 25 announced:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA...will continue the lectures on "Mind Culture" at Washington Hall, 320 Post Street...: Thursday, March 29, "The Science of Breathing"; Tuesday, April 3, "Meditation"; Thursday, April 5, "The Practice of Religion, Breathing and Meditation"; tickets 50c; or the course \$1.00.

Ida Ansell's second transcripts of these three lectures have been published in volumes one, four, and one, respectively, of the *Complete Works*. (I should remind the reader that in quoting from the edited and published forms of Miss Ansell's second transcripts, I have omitted the ellipsis marks and brackets. The dots and brackets given here are my own.) As published, Swamiji's first lecture in this series on "Mind Culture" has been entitled simply "Breathing" and has been dated, in accordance with Miss Ansell's transcript, March 28, rather than March 29 as in the above announcement. The third lecture has been entitled "Practical Religion: Breathing and Meditation." More important to notice than dates and titles, however, was Swamiji's reason for giving this second series on raja yoga. He himself explained it.

"In the last course," he said near the opening of "The Science of Breathing," "we have been studying the method of philosophy, trying to bring everything under control, once more asserting the freedom of the soul by customs of its own, conquering the body without [the body's] help." (The last part of this sentence following "freedom of the soul" has been omitted from the *Complete Works*.) "It is very difficult," he continued. "This way is not for everybody. The embodied mind tries it with great trouble."¹ As pointed out in the *Complete Works*, these last three sentences were a free translation from the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:5). But while in this chapter, "The Way of Divine Love," the Gita recommends devotion to the Personal

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

God as an easier path to the same goal, Swamiji recommended in this particular lecture the way of raja yoga—the impersonal, methodical means of strengthening the mind and will, of drawing forth unlimited power from within oneself.

“A little physical help will make the mind comfortable,” he went on. “What would be more rational than to have the mind itself accomplish the thing? But it cannot. The physical help is necessary for most of us. The system of raja yoga is to utilize these physical helps, to make use of the powers and forces in the body to produce certain mental states, to make the mind stronger and stronger until it regains its lost empire. By sheer force of will if anyone can attain to that, so much the better. But most of us cannot, so we will use physical means, and help the will on its way.”²

Toward the end of this lecture Swamiji explained further the utility of the first stages of raja yoga. “Slowly and gradually you get into the chambers of the mind and gradually get control of the mind. It is a long, hard struggle. It must not be taken up as something curious. When one wants to do something, he has a plan. Raja yoga proposes no faith, no belief, no God. If you believe in two thousand gods, you can try that. Why not? But in raja yoga it is impersonal principles.”³

According to a brief report in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of March 30, “Vivekananda answered questions at the close of the lecture as he will after the next two which will be on ‘Meditation’ and ‘Explanations in Regard to Breathing.’ ”

The very heart of raja yoga, was, of course, meditation; and in his lecture of that title Swamiji explained why. “The world is a combination of you [that is, of one’s mind] and something else. . . . These waves that rise in the mind have caused many things outside. We are not discussing the merits of idealism and realism. We take for granted that things exist outside, but what we see is different from things that exist outside, as we see what exists outside plus ourselves. Suppose I take my contribution out of the glass. What remains? Almost nothing. The glass will disappear. If I take my contribution from the

table, what would remain of the table? Certainly not this table, because it was a mixture of the outside plus my contribution.... If I do not contribute my share, it has got to stop. You are creating this bondage all the time. How? By putting in your share. We are all making our own beds, forging our own chains.... Meditation means the mind is turned back upon itself. The mind stops all the thought-waves and the world stops. Your consciousness expands. Every time you meditate you will keep your growth."⁴

Swamiji kept the goal of meditation in clear view of his audience: "It is meditation that brings us nearer to truth than anything else.... This is what I mean by meditation—the soul trying to stand upon itself. That state must surely be the healthiest state of the soul, when it is thinking of itself, residing in its own glory."⁵ "Word worshippers!" he scoffed. "'God is spirit.' God is spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and faith. Where does the spirit reside? On a tree? On a cloud? What do you mean by God being *ours*? *You are* the spirit. That is the first fundamental belief you must never give up. I am the spiritual being. It is there. All this skill of Yoga and this system of meditation and everything is just to find Him there."⁶

"But is it *practical*?" was a question Swamiji was often asked in regard to Vedanta. The question had two meanings: first, was the ideal possible to attain, and second, would its attainment make for a better world. In the third lecture in the series on "Mind Culture"—"Practical Religion: Breathing and Meditation" (as I shall call it)—he answered both questions.

"Can man attain to the power of mastery of the body? Yoga says it is practical. Supposing it is not—suppose there are doubts in your mind. You have got to try it. There is no other way out."⁷ That took care of the first question. As for the second, Swamiji devoted much more time to its answer.

"Why are people struggling?" he asked in "Practical Religion," and answered, "To lessen the misery [of the world]. [But whence comes this misery?] All unhappiness is caused by our not having mastery over the body. We are all putting the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

cart before the horse. Take the system of work, for instance. We are trying to do good by comforting the poor. We do not get to the cause which created the misery. It is like taking a bucket to empty out the ocean, and more water comes all the time. The Yogi sees that this is nonsense. . . . The Yogi says, religion is practical if you know first why misery exists. All the misery in the world is in the senses. . . . You may do good works all the time. All the same, you will be the slave of your senses, you will be miserable and unhappy. . . . You call yourselves men! You stand up and build hospitals. You are fools! . . . The conquest of internal nature is the only way out, according to Yoga. . . . It is much easier to do anything upon the external plane, but the greatest conqueror in the world finds himself a mere child when he tries to control his own mind. This is the world he has to conquer—the greater and more difficult world to conquer.”⁸

Perhaps nothing could have more dumbfounded many of Swamiji’s listeners, or have seemed more Orientaly pessimistic and other-worldly to them, than his concepts of practical religion. Let us take a little time here to recall what was going on at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one in regard to this subject.

After the Civil War (1861–1865), a number of people, largely thinkers, writers, reformers, and clergymen of the well-to-do middle classes, had become aware, first in England, then in America, that the Industrial Revolution was not turning out to be an unmitigated blessing. “At the beginning of this marvelous era,” Henry George wrote in 1877 in the introductory chapter of what was to become his famous and influential book *Progress and Poverty*, “it was natural to expect, and it was expected, that labor-saving inventions would lighten the toil and improve the conditions of the laborer; that the enormous increase in the power of producing wealth would make real poverty a thing of the past. . . . Now, however, we are coming into collision with facts which there can be no mistaking.”⁹ These unmistakable facts were, among other things, the grinding,

hopeless poverty and debilitating toil of millions of men, women, and children, the unspeakable urban slums, rampant vice, unchecked municipal corruption, frequent industrial depressions, and along with all this (in what many felt to be a causal relationship), the increasing splendor and power of the capitalistic rich.

Henry George was not alone in taking note of such facts. In the eighties and nineties many men—Edward Bellamy, Lester Ward, Richard Ely, Henry C. Adams, Jacob Riis, to mention only a few—wrote books and articles, gave lectures, and organized societies to protest the glaring and proliferating evils of the age and to propose various solutions that ranged from gradual reform to radical and immediate socialism. Simultaneously, the liberal churches entered the field with a solution called the Social Gospel or, as a movement, Socialized Christianity or Christian Socialism. This, too, varied widely in its degrees of radicalism; indeed, except for its frequent references to God, it was not on the whole different in its outlooks, methods, or goal from the secular movements. The general idea behind all these movements—both those within the churches and those outside them—was that man must take a hand in the natural laws of Progress by exerting political control over his social and economic environment. Few people questioned the inevitability of Progress itself; the question that agitated the late-nineteenth-century mind was how God and nature intended Progress to proceed.

Generally speaking, these various reform movements were in direct opposition to the theories of the social evolutionists. According to Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, and their popularizer, the personable, learned, and highly persuasive John Fiske, the natural laws of evolution, such as competitive struggle and the survival of the fittest, through which God was unfolding His great Purpose, should not on any account be interfered with, harsh though they might sometimes seem, but be allowed to bring about the ultimate and glorious Goal for which the Creator had set them in motion,

namely, the perfect human society. "Enthusiastic social architects," William Graham Sumner wrote, only postpone all our chances of real improvement. "Society needs first of all to be freed from these meddlers—that is, to be let alone."¹⁰

But the "meddlers"—the new Christian Socialists and the Social Gospelers—saw God's plan in a different light—a light which disclosed that the ethical teachings of Christianity were a necessary part of evolution. According to one of the more liberal papers read at the Parliament of Religions, Christianity was "the further evolution. It is an evolution re-enforced with all the moral and spiritual forces that have entered the world and cleaved to humanity through Jesus Christ.... Organic evolution is but the earlier chapter of Christianity.... Christianity is but the later evolution."¹¹ The Reverend Francis G. Peabody, a Unitarian and a Harvard professor, spoke for Socialized Christianity when he assured the Parliament that "a completed social order was Christ's highest dream." The Kingdom of God on earth, he said, was the one thing to be desired—"that perfected world of humanity in which, as in a perfect body, each part should be sound and whole, and thus the body be complete."¹² Properly understood, the Social Gospelers contended, Christ's teachings meant just one thing: the Kingdom of God on Earth must be brought about and could be brought about only through the moral regeneration, or the Christianization, of the political, economic, industrial, and social environment. To accomplish this wholesale regeneration was the essential, indeed the only, function and responsibility of religion. "Do you want to commence building a Heaven on earth?" Mrs. B. Fay Mills had cried in her Oakland sermon "Heaven and How to Escape from It." "You can begin at once. There is a work for you right at hand. You can find in the political, educational, social and industrial conditions that surround us a great field in which to begin."¹³

During his first visit to the West Swamiji had had a firsthand acquaintance with the views of Socialized Christianity. Unitarian and Congregational ministers, at whose churches he

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

sometimes spoke, were generally of Social Gospel persuasion. The Free Religious Association, to which a number of his friends belonged and before which he once spoke, was a staunch upholder of social reform. Many of the members of the Brooklyn Ethical Association, with whom he was well acquainted, were swinging toward the Social Gospel or its secular equivalent (though its former president, Swamiji's great friend Dr. Lewis G. Janes, was an ardent Spencerian). Again, the forward-looking Twentieth Century Club in Boston, where Swamiji spoke in 1896, was dedicated to Progress and Reform.

Although the Social Gospel had its beginnings largely on the East Coast among the liberals and intellectuals, its spirit soon spread throughout the country. Many preachers and reformers took up the theme of collective moral regeneration. The Reverend B. Fay Mills, for instance, switched from evangelism to liberalism, from saving individual souls to saving society. The ordinarily reserved and scholarly Reverend Charles H. Parkhurst, pastor of the staid Madison Square Presbyterian Church and a friend, or at least an acquaintance, of Swamiji's, suddenly sought to eliminate vice from New York and indeed managed, almost single-handedly, to dethrone for a time the powerful and infamous administration of Tammany Hall. On quite a different level, the young and rambunctious Vrooman Brothers, who were also acquaintances of Swamiji's, railed interminably against corrupt Baltimore politics, calling their campaign "Dynamic Religion."

Perhaps the most well-known and influential popularizer of the Social Gospel was the Reverend Charles M. Sheldon, a Congregational pastor of Topeka, Kansas, one of whose books, a novel entitled *In His Steps: What Would Christ Do?*, first published in 1896, is said to have sold more copies throughout the world (some twenty-two million by 1937) than any other book written in America. What would happen, Mr. Sheldon asked, if a whole congregation should follow "in His steps" for a year, each person conducting his business or profession as Christ would conduct it? The concept had tremendous appeal.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

In February of 1900, Mr. Sheldon conceived the idea of editing a newspaper "as Christ would edit it," and the following month he actually assumed for a week the editorship of the *Topeka Capital*, filling its columns with denunciations of, among other things, trusts and the liquor traffic.

Partly in consonance with this spirit of reform, a veritable flood of good works poured over the United States. "By the end of the century the voluntary gifts by both rich and poor totalled hundreds of millions of dollars annually."¹⁴ But by no means all of this humanitarianism stemmed from the liberal churches or was directly inspired by the Social Gospel. Much of it was the result of a sort of counter gospel, known as the Gospel of Wealth. As Andrew Carnegie had put it in his essay of that title: "Thus is the problem of rich and poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free, the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee of the poor. . . . Such, in my opinion is the true gospel concerning wealth."¹⁵ To a great many Americans this true gospel concerning wealth seemed an excellent means of tempering the stern laws of evolution without recklessly tampering with them. And who, after all, could be better trustees of the poor than the rich? Americans had been brought up to believe firmly that it was the wise, virtuous, upright man who became the rich man. "In the long run, it is only to the man of morality that wealth comes," Bishop William Lawrence of Massachusetts could solemnly proclaim from the pulpit. "Godliness is in league with riches."¹⁶ And the extremely popular Reverend Henry Ward Beecher had earlier declared to his wealthy congregation in Brooklyn, "Generally the proposition is true that where you find the most religion there you find the most worldly prosperity."¹⁷

One might say that there was a sort of undeclared, and to the majority of churchgoers unsuspected, war of good works going on in America at the end of the century. One side was good-working to maintain the status quo; the other, very much outnumbered, side was good-working to change it.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

Both efforts (which overlapped here and there and reflected many shades of opinion, for nothing was clear-cut in that confused age) were dedicated to material Progress, or, as it was more generally spoken of, the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Both were politically oriented and both were called practical religion. Indeed, by 1900 organized humanitarianism, in all its uses and motivations, constituted the very core of religion itself.

"What is the practical religion you are thinking of?" Swamiji cried. "Lord help us! 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' That means street-cleaning, hospital-building, and all that? Good works, when you do them with a pure mind. . . . Serve as worship of the Lord Himself in the poor, the miserable, the weak. That done, the result is secondary. That sort of work, done without any thought of gain, benefits the soul. And even of such is the kingdom of heaven."¹⁸

In that age of heady optimism when Americans stood, so they thought, on the threshold of the Millennium, Swamiji thundered, "Renounce! Renounce! Sacrifice! Give up! Not for zero. Not for nothing. But to get the higher. . . . This is practical religion. What else? Cleaning streets and building hospitals? Their value consists only in this renunciation. And there is no end to renunciation. . . . Where God is, there is no other. Where the world is, there is no God. These two will never unite. . . . This is what I have understood from Christianity and the life of the Teacher. Is not that Buddhism? Is not that Hinduism? Is not that Mohammedanism? Is not that the teaching of all the great sages and teachers?"¹⁹

From one point of view, one might say that the heart of Swamiji's message lay in his definition of practical religion, indeed of religion itself, and nowhere was that definition more clearly, more sharply enunciated than in "The Practice of Religion," which he delivered in Alameda on April 18 and from which the above quotations come. Although this lecture takes us some three weeks beyond our story, it was, in a sense, a continuation of his San Francisco lecture "Practical Religion:

Breathing and Meditation," and is thus not out of place here. It was his answer, not to bigotry, not to narrowness, but to something equally ruinous to spirituality: the secularization of religion in the name of religion itself, which was rapidly stifling what little mysticism (to use that word in its true sense) Christianity then possessed.

"We hear all around us about practical religion," Swamiji said in Alameda, "and analyzing all that, we find that it can be brought down to one conception—charity to our fellow beings. Is that all of religion? Every day we hear in this country about practical Christianity—that a man has done some good to his fellow beings. Is that all? What is the goal of life? Is this world the goal of life? Nothing more? Are we to be just what we are, nothing more? The highest dream of many religions is the world. The vast majority of people are dreaming of the time when there will be no more disease, sickness, poverty, or misery of any kind. They will have a good time all around. Practical religion, therefore, simply means: 'Clean the street! Make it nice!' We see how all enjoy it. Is enjoyment the goal of life?... What a mistake then to become a man! Vain have been my years—hundreds of years—of struggle only to become the man of sense enjoyments.

"Mark therefore," he continued, "the ordinary theory of practical religion, what it leads to. Charity is great, but the moment you say it is all, you run the risk of running into materialism. It is not religion. It is not better than atheism—a little less. You Christians, have you found nothing else in the Bible than working for fellow creatures, building hospitals? Here stands a shopkeeper and says how Jesus would have kept the shop! Jesus would neither have kept a saloon, nor a shop, nor have edited a newspaper. That sort of practical religion is good, not bad, but it is just kindergarten religion. It leads nowhere."²⁰

Nor was that sort of practical religion practical even for its own ends. "Look at the sum total of good and evil in this world," Swamiji pointed out. "Has it changed? Ages have

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

passed, and practical religion has worked for ages. The world thought that each time the problem would be solved. It is always the same problem. At best it changes its form. . . . It is like old rheumatism: Drive it from one place, it goes to another. . . . This universe, nature, or whatever you call it, must be limited; it can never be unlimited. The Absolute, to become nature, must be limited by time, space, and causation. The energy at our disposal is limited. You can spend it in one place, losing it in another. The sum total is always the same. Wherever there is a wave in one place, there is a hollow in another. If one nation becomes rich, others become poor. Good balances evil. . . . Some weep and others laugh. The latter will weep in their turn and the others laugh. What can we do? We know we cannot do anything. Which of us do anything because we want to do good? How few! They can be counted on the fingers. The rest of us also do good, but because we are forced to do so. We cannot stop. Onward we go, knocked about from place to place. What can we do? The world will be the same world, the earth the same.”²¹

In those days when Progress was an almost sacred concept, as though it were some sort of divine attribute—the way in which God behaved—Swamiji’s logical denial that good will steadily increase, evil as steadily decrease, must have seemed almost blasphemous. Even those closest to him were disturbed by his apparent pessimism. Did he not know, as one who walked with God *should* know, that all things were working together for good? “ ‘God’s in His heaven, all’s right with the world,’ ” Mrs. Hale had reminded him even during his first visit to America, and had reinforced this thought with another: “ ‘Through the ages one increasing purpose runs, and the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.’ I cannot see that holding that to be true,” she had continued, “our efforts to ameliorate conditions would be paralyzed—I think they would be strengthened.”²² In 1900 Tennyson’s lines were no doubt still on the lips of Swamiji’s friends. “Through the ages one purpose runs sure,” he mocked in a letter to Mary

Hale, written possibly in January. "And that will be finished with the destruction of this earth and the sun! And worlds are always in progress indeed! And nobody as yet developed enough in any one of the infinite worlds to communicate with us! Bosh! They are born, show the same phenomena and die the same death! Increasing purpose! Babies! Live in the land of dreams, you babies!"²³

Should we not try to do good then? "Certainly," Swamiji would often reply. "Do good for good's sake!" In India he perhaps spoke more strongly on this point than elsewhere, for in India the futility of material progress as an end in itself was all too well understood. "What good will come of any kind of work in this evanescent world?" Swamiji's disciple Chakravarty had typically asked him. "My boy," Swamiji had answered, "when death is inevitable, is it not better to die like heroes than as stocks and stones? And what is the use of living a day or two more in this transitory world? It is better to wear out than to rust out—specially for the sake of doing the least good to others."²⁴ Further—to the same disciple, who on another occasion had asked the same question: "[To do good to others] is necessary for one's own good. We become forgetful of the ego when we think of the body as dedicated to the service of others. . . . Thus it is that doing good to others constitutes a way, a means of revealing one's own Self or Atman."²⁵

Actually, there was no cry of the human heart that Swamiji did not hear and long to comfort; there was nothing about man he ignored, no aspect of his welfare that did not claim his concern. "You know," he once said to Mrs. Hansbrough in San Francisco, "I may have to be born again." The reason he gave was not that he would have to come back with Sri Ramakrishna, as he had said at other times; rather, the will to return would be his own as well as his Master's and of a piece with his own vastness of heart. "I may have to be born again," he said, "because I have fallen in love with man."²⁶ But he knew, knew with a knowledge as profound as his compassion, that there was only one remedy for the anguish of man: until

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

men become spiritual, until their acts and thoughts are impregnated with the spiritual ideal, and until this ideal is made real through spiritual experience there can be no heaven on earth in any sense of the term. Indeed, to Swamiji's mind the very last way to ameliorate conditions in the West was to socialize, secularize Christianity. Thus, where "doing good" was piously undertaken for material ends and where both these means and these ends were fast becoming the whole of religion, he pointed out again and again the basic fallacy, if not the hypocrisy, behind this particular "gospel."

What, then, was practical religion? "Practical religion," Swamiji replied, "is identifying myself with my Self. Stop this wrong identification [with matter]! How far are you advanced in that? You may have built two thousand hospitals, built fifty thousand roads, and yet what of that, if you have not realised that you are the spirit? . . . You must see God. The spirit must be realised, and that is practical religion. It is not what Christ preached that *you* call practical religion. . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is within us. He is there. He is the soul of all souls. See Him in your own soul. That is practical religion. That is freedom. . . . That is real worship. Realise yourself. That is all there is to do. Know yourself as you are—infinite spirit. That is practical religion. Everything else is impractical, for everything else will vanish. That alone will never vanish. It is eternal. Hospitals will tumble down. Railroad givers [builders?] will all die. This earth will be blown to pieces, suns wiped out. The soul endureth for ever. . . . Therefore to realise the spirit as spirit is practical religion. Everything else is good so far as it leads to this one grand idea. That realisation is to be attained by renunciation, by meditation—renunciation of all the senses, cutting the knots, the chains that bind us down to matter. 'I do not want to get material life, do not want the sense-life, but something higher.' That is renunciation. Then, by the power of meditation, undo the mischief that has been done."²⁷

Americans were quick to reply to Swamiji: Well now, if this kind of practical religion leads to conditions as they are in

India—the all-around degradation, the famines, the plagues (there were, in fact, severe plague and famine in India in February and March of 1900), the hopeless poverty, the inequalities and injustices of the caste system, the misery of child widows... (the list was long), then how can this kind of practical religion be practical? The question, with its implications of Western superiority, always annoyed Swamiji. He could have replied, and sometimes did, that the condition of India was due in part to British colonialism (as readers of Henry George would have known), in part to the complex and inevitable rises and falls of the historical process, in part to the fact that the pure Vedanta of the Upanishads had never been given to the Hindu masses. But more beneficial for Americans to hear from Swamiji's lips was a rebuke of their own bottomless conceit. In the lecture "Meditation" one finds a paragraph in which he strongly chided the people of the West for their assumption of superiority in all matters under the sun. In the published version the quotation marks within this paragraph would seem to be wrongly placed, thus robbing Swamiji's reproach of its sting.

"I am asked," he said, "'Why do you Indian people not conquer these things [through yoga]?' "28 Here the quotation marks should, one thinks, be closed. The remainder of this paragraph does not appear to be a continuation of the query, but Swamiji's scathing reply to it, not all of which, one suspects, Miss Ansell took down, or took down correctly. Her first, unedited, transcript reads at this point: "You all the time claim to be the superior people of everybody else. You practice it and do it quicker than anybody else. Indian people are not fit themselves for such great work! You are fitter. Carry it out. If you are the great people, you ought to have the great system. You will have to [dispense with] the gods. Let them go to sleep. You take up the great philosophy. You are mere babies, as superstitious as the rest of the world, and all your claims are failures. If you have the claims, stand up and be bold, and all the heaven that ever existed is yours. The musk deer has the

fragrance inside and he does not know where the fragrance is. Then after days and days he finds it in him. All these gods [and] demons [are] within [you]. You must find out, by the powers of reason, education and culture, that it is all in yourself. No more gods and superstitions. You want to be rational, to be Yogis, really spiritual. Everything [in the West] is material. What more material than God sitting on a throne? Yet you look down upon the poor man who is worshipping the image. You are not better. And you gold worshippers, what are you? The image worshipper worships his God, something he can see. But you do not even do that. You do not worship the spirit nor something that you can understand."²⁹

Thus (though more clearly, it is certain,) did Swamiji press home his point. Yet, needless to say, everything in the West (over seventy years later) is still material. In spite of all its disillusionment with Progress (which is no longer spelled with a capital *P*), in spite of all its gropings for a religion profound enough, universal enough, and "man-making" enough to meet the unprecedented demands of the present age—a religion that would spring from and, in turn, serve to draw forth the enormous, indeed infinite, power and goodness of man—the Western world has yet to assimilate Swamiji's message. But, as we have said before, he spoke not for a day but for an age, an age that was then only in its infancy. "You may not like what I am saying," he told a San Francisco audience when speaking of the monistic concept of God and man. "You may curse me today, but tomorrow you will bless me."³⁰

24

To return to Swamiji's lectures at Washington Hall, we now come to one entitled "Discipleship," which, unlike most of his West Coast lectures, does not belong to a series. According to Ida Ansell's transcript, Swamiji gave it on March 29; but around this time Miss Ansell seems to have been a day behind. She gave the date March 28 to "The Science of Breathing,"

though Swamiji almost certainly delivered it on March 29. It would be in keeping, then, for her to give the date March 29 to a lecture delivered on March 30. But whenever Swamiji gave "Discipleship," one does not find a lecture similar to it in the *Complete Works*. It was in a class by itself, as were several others that he gave in California, such as "My Life and Mission" and "Women of India," both of which had been given in Pasadena on requests from the audience. In "Discipleship" Swamiji dealt with the four basic conditions that must be fulfilled before one is able to receive and contain the spiritual power transmitted by a guru—the same traditional qualifications he had mentioned at the beginning of "Six Lessons of Raja Yoga." "These are the four conditions which one who wants to be a disciple must fulfill," he concluded; "without fulfilling them he will not be able to come in contact with the true Guru. And even if he is fortunate enough to find him, he will not be quickened by the power that the Guru may transmit. There cannot be any compromising of these conditions. With the fulfillment of these conditions—with all these preparations—the lotus of the disciple's heart will open and the bee shall come. Then the disciple knows that the Guru was within the body, within himself. He opens out. He realizes. He crosses the ocean of life, goes beyond. He crosses this terrible ocean, and in mercy, without a thought of gain or praise, he in his turn helps others to cross."¹

On April 8 Swamiji delivered the fifth and last lecture in his Sunday series on the Great Teachers of the World. On the previous Sunday afternoons, as the reader will remember, he had spoken on the messages of Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, and Sri Krishna. One might have expected him to close this series with a talk on the great Teacher of the present age, his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, but, significantly, he chose instead the title "Is Vedanta Philosophy the Future Religion?" Throughout his mission Swamiji had preached his Master's message; seldom had he spoken publicly on his Master himself. Perhaps the primary reason for his reticence in this regard lay

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

in his insistence upon placing principle above person, an insistence never so pronounced as during his second visit to the West, when even during his lectures on the Great Teachers he had urged man to "be not an imitation of Jesus, but be Jesus!" His great care always was not to start a cult. "I have never preached personalities," he had said in 1898 during an interview in Calcutta. "My own life is guided by the enthusiasm of this great soul [Sri Ramakrishna]; but others will decide for themselves how far they share in this attitude. Inspiration is not filtered out to the world through one channel, however great. Each generation should be inspired afresh. Are we not all God?"²

On the other hand, there seems to have been little doubt in Swamiji's mind that Sri Ramakrishna would become universally known and worshiped, that the unprecedented greatness of that life would become a source of spiritual inspiration to the entire world for an untold number of generations. Indeed, the inevitability of the universal worship of Sri Ramakrishna was perhaps all the more reason that he dwelt almost exclusively on the essential *principles* of his Master's teachings, impressing upon the world-mind the eternal truths which had been exemplified to the full in his person. Before Sri Ramakrishna could be imprisoned within a cult, before he could be stereotyped and limited by one interpretation or another, or divided up into a number of divergent interpretations, Swamiji presented the universality of his life and teachings, equating them with the impersonal and timeless teachings of Vedanta.

"Is Vedanta the Future Religion?" (as it is entitled in the *Complete Works*) was fully in keeping with the dominant trend of Swamiji's teaching during this second visit to America when his emphasis on "man-making" was so strong, so pronounced. By Vedanta he here meant Advaita, or monistic, Vedanta, the religion that left behind scriptural authority, left behind dependence upon a Savior, left behind even the Personal God—the religion, in short, that outdistanced most of the things that the majority of people looked upon as the very

foundation of religion itself. "These are what Vedanta has *not* to give," he said. "No book, no man to be singled out from the rest of mankind. . . . no Personal God. All these must go. Again, the senses must go. . . . What is the God of Vedanta? He is principle, not person. You and I are all Personal Gods. The absolute God of the universe, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, is impersonal principle. You and I, the cat, rat, devil, and ghost, all these are Its persons—all are Personal Gods. You want to worship Personal Gods. It is the worship of your own self. If you take my advice, you will never enter any church. Come out and go and wash off. Wash your self again and again until you are cleansed of all the superstitions that have clung to you through the ages."³

It was indeed a "man-making religion" that Swamiji preached in San Francisco, a religion to build heroes. "We want a Personal God, a saviour or a prophet to do everything for us," he said. ". . . All this running after help is foolishness. . . . Never does any help come from the outside. There is no help for man. None ever was, none is, and none will be. Why should there be? Are you not men and women? Are the lords of the earth to be helped by others? Are you not ashamed? You will be helped when you are reduced to dust. But you are spirit. Pull yourself out of difficulties by yourself! Save yourself by yourself! There is none to help you—never was. To think that there is, is sweet delusion. It comes to no good."⁴

But could the world accept a religion such as this? Could man accept here and now the truth of his own spiritual sovereignty, or would he have to inch and wind toward that high summit along the old paths of lesser truths—and would he reach it even then? "Sometimes I agree," Swamiji said, "that there is some good in the dualistic method: it helps many who are weak. . . . All the various practices and trainings, Bibles and Gods, are but the rudiments of religion, the kindergartens of religion. But, then," he went on, "I think of the other side. How long will the world have to wait to reach the truth if it follows this slow, gradual process? How long? And where is

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

the surety that it will ever succeed to any appreciable degree? It has not so far. After all, gradual or not gradual, easy or not easy to the weak, is not the dualistic method based on falsehood? Are not all the prevalent religious practices often weakening and therefore wrong? They are based on a wrong idea, a wrong view of man. Would two wrongs make one right? Would the lie become truth? Would darkness become light?"⁵

Studying Swamiji's California lectures and classes as a whole, considering that he himself felt he had a new message to give, one cannot but conclude that this lecture was a deeply considered one. "Today I am preaching the thing I like," he said. But he was also preaching as a World Teacher who knew the time had come to give the highest truth to all. He asked whoever could to leap ahead in one courageous bound rather than to crawl along snail-paced and with dubious success from "lower truth to higher truth." Was it not to bring about this swift upward surge of the human soul that Sri Ramakrishna had come to earth? "I am the servant of a man who has passed away," Swamiji said. "I am only the messenger. I want to make the experiment. The teachings of Vedanta I have told you about were never really experimented with before. Although Vedanta is the oldest philosophy in the world, it has always become mixed up with superstitions and everything else."⁶

Yet the question remained: Is Vedanta the future religion? Swamiji was regretfully aware that not everyone could, or would, accept it. "There is a chance," he said, "of Vedanta becoming the religion of your country because of democracy. But it can become so only if you can and do clearly understand it, if you become real men and women, not people with vague ideas and superstitions in your brains, and if you want to be truly spiritual, since Vedanta is concerned only with spirituality."⁷ But that was a big "if." "If Vedanta—this conscious knowledge that all is one spirit—spreads, the whole of humanity will become spiritual," he said later on in this same lecture.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

"But is it possible?" Realistic always, he answered: "I do not know. Not within thousands of years. The old superstitions must run out. . . . Religion has been religion to very few. . . . For thousands of years millions and millions all over the world have been taught to worship the Lord of the world, the Incarnations, the saviours, the prophets. They have been taught to consider themselves helpless, miserable creatures and to depend upon the mercy of some person or persons for salvation. There are no doubt many marvellous things in such beliefs. But even at their best, they are but kindergartens of religion, and they have helped but little. Men are still hypnotised into abject degradation. However," he concluded, "there are some strong souls who get over that illusion. The hour will come when great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and shall make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the spirit by the spirit."⁸

It was for these great men who would leaven the whole that Swamiji taught. His conviction seems always to have been that a few such "lion-souls" in each country would be enough to shake the world. Further, he seemed more and more convinced that a much larger number of men and women than is ordinarily believed could rise to his call and to the greatness of their own divine nature. If Vedanta could not be at once practiced by all, it surely could be practiced by many, and it surely could serve as the ideal for millions more. Why else, if Swamiji was not certain of this, did he preach the divinity of man during these last years of his life so steadily, with such bold strokes, and in such clear, undiluted colors? "How many of you take me seriously?" he asked in "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?" "But the truth is all here, and I must tell you the truth."⁹

"Is Vedanta the Future Religion?" would have been Swamiji's last lecture in San Francisco. A day or two later he

moved from the Turk Street flat to the town of Alameda in the East Bay, and if nothing untoward had in the meanwhile taken place, it is probable that his public work in San Francisco would have thus come to a close. After the first week in March things had gone well. "I am getting all the work I can do and more," he had written to Mrs. Bull on April 1. "I will make my passage, anyhow. Though they cannot pay me much, yet they pay some, and by constant work I will make enough to pay my way and have a few hundred in the pocket anyhow."¹

Swamiji would have learned of his financial standing through consultation with Mrs. Hansbrough. Although he himself tried for a time to keep track of his earnings and expenses in San Francisco (there is a little notebook preserved at Belur Math which bears brief testimony to this effort), he rarely remembered to write down the figures. Mrs. Hansbrough was the acting accountant, which is not to say a great deal, for, as I have learned from her daughter, keeping accounts was not among her skills; yet her method was direct. As mentioned earlier, she used to change the admission or collection money into twenty-dollar gold pieces, which in those days circulated freely. These—each the size of a silver dollar—she stowed in a teapot. Later, when the teapot was half full, she appropriated other small pots around the flat, until at length she had "several pots half full of twenty-dollar gold pieces." From time to time, Swamiji would ask her to figure out how much he had earned to date. "So I would get my notebook and pencil," she related, "and would bring the pots and dump the coins out on the table. After counting the money Swamiji would find that there was not enough, so he would decide to open another series of lectures."²

But after Swamiji had completed his San Francisco lecture series on raja yoga in the first week of April (he had given the last lecture of this series—"Practical Religion and Breathing"—on April 5) he seems to have been satisfied with the number of gold coins he had earned. "My work here is done," he wrote

to Sister Nivedita on April 6. "I will come in fifteen days to Chicago if Mary [Hale] is there."³

As it happened, however, Swamiji's work in San Francisco was not yet done. The very next day (April 7) he wrote to Mrs. Bull, "You see, I will have to stay here more than I want and work." The explanation of Swamiji's overnight change of plan is contained in an unpublished passage that preceded this sentence. "Today's letter from the Math," he had written, "tells me that the Raja of Khetri has stopped the stipend—well, Mother's will. The Raja has been very good for years. All blessings on him and his. I am calm and quiet more than ever," he continued. "I am on my own feet working—hard and with pleasure. To work I have the right—Mother knows the rest. So you see I will have to stay here..."⁴

That the Raja of Khetri had "stopped the stipend" was not a matter of small importance, and since it has bearing on our present story, something of the relationship between Swamiji and his good friend and disciple Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri can be told here. In his book *Swami Vivekananda, A Forgotten Chapter of His Life*, Mr. Benishanker Sharma has pointed out the important role the Maharaja played in Swamiji's life, concluding that it was he who had paid his passage to America in 1893 (certainly he had borne a substantial share of the cost); it was he, also, who had helped in the support of his mother and two younger brothers, sending them one hundred rupees a month (then about \$ 32.50) and thus lifting a great burden from Swamiji's mind. The Maharaja had also contributed to Swamiji's own living expenses, forwarding him money from time to time (more than half of which Swamiji would, in turn, regularly give to the Belur Math). Further, it was the Maharaja to whom Swamiji felt free to turn when matters connected with his personal finances became desperate.

Along with other previously unpublished material, Mr. Sharma has included in his book two letters written by Swamiji toward the end of 1898, asking Maharaja Ajit Singh for help

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

for both his family and himself. In the first of these letters, dated November 22, 1898, he wrote in part:

...I appeal to your Highness's word, generosity and friendship. I have one great sin rankling always in my breast and that is to do a service to the world I have sadly neglected my mother. Again since my second brother [Mahendranath] has gone away she has become awfully worn out with grief. Now my last desire is to make सेवा [seva] and serve my mother for some years at least. I want to live with my mother and get my younger brother married to prevent extinction of the family. This will certainly smoothen my last days as well as that of my mother. She lives now in a hovel. I want to build a little decent home for her and make some provision for the younges: as there is very little hope of his being a good earning man. Is it too much for a royal descendent of Ramchandra to do for one he loves and calls his friend? I do not know whom-else to appeal to. The money I got from Europe was for the 'work' and every penny almost has been given over to that work. Nor can I go beg of others for help for my own self. About my own family affairs I have exposed myself to your Highness and none else shall know of it. I am tired heart-sick and dying—do, I pray, this last great work of kindness to me.⁶

The Maharaja evidently agreed to help Swamiji in whatever way he could, and in his second letter, dated December 1, 1898, Swamiji went into greater detail:

The lowest possible estimate of building a little home in Calcutta is at least ten thousand rupees. With that it is barely possible to buy or build a house in some out-of-the-way quarter of the town a little house fit for 4 or 5 persons to live in.

As for the expenses of living, the 100 Rs. a month your

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

generosity is supplying my mother is enough for her. If another 100 Rs. a month be added to it for my life-time for my expenses which unfortunately this illness has increased, and which I hope will not be for long a source of trouble to you, as I expect only to live a few years at best; I will be perfectly happy. One thing more will I beg of you—if possible the 100 Rs. a month for my mother be made permanent. So that even after my death it may regularly reach her, or even if your Highness ever gets reasons to stop your love and kindness for me, my poor old mother may be provided, remembering the love you once had for a poor *Sadhu*.⁶

On receipt of this letter the Maharaja at once sent Swamiji five hundred rupees (about \$160), but whether or not he was able to give ten thousand rupees toward the purchase of a small house is not clear. All we know at present is that it was necessary for Swamiji to borrow five thousand rupees from the Belur Math in order to buy a house from his aunt and that later, when this house was not conveyed to him, he thought of building a cottage for his mother on the Ganges. This later plan, which one reads of in one or two of his letters written in March of 1900, was short-lived; in May, he wrote to Mrs. Bull in an unpublished letter, 'which I shall give in full later on, "I have long given up the idea of a little house on the Ganges—as I have not the money.... Kindly write to Saradananda from yourself to give up the little house plan."' Thus, all in all, it would appear that the Maharaja of Khetri had not been able to help in regard to a house for Swamiji's mother. Very possibly, however, he began to send Swamiji a monthly stipend in 1899, and possibly he was also able to assure him that the monthly allowance to his mother would be permanent. Indeed, Mr. Sharma states that the sum of Rs 100 was paid monthly to Swamiji's mother from the Treasury of the Khetri Estate until her death in 1911.⁸ Although Mr. Sharma does not present any evidence to support this statement or to show that

the Maharaja had actually promised to comply with Swamiji's request in regard to his mother, we can, I imagine, assume that he did so promise. And if he had given his word, he would have kept it. "A Rajput would rather die than break his promise," Swamiji once wrote;⁹ and Maharaja Ajit Singh was a Rajput. Evidently he passed this particular obligation on to his heirs, for, as is well known, he died from an accidental fall in January of 1901.

Presumably, the stipend that he abruptly stopped in April (or March) of 1900 was not the monthly allowance to Swamiji's mother but the money he had been sending to Swamiji through the Belur Math for his personal expenses—only a small part of which, as we have seen, Swamiji kept for himself. Why the Maharaja stopped sending this money is not known at the present time; perhaps he felt that Swamiji had many rich American friends who could look after him in their own country. But whatever the cause may have been, the result was that Swamiji had to give an extra series of evening lectures in San Francisco, coming from Alameda once or twice to do so. Yet he did not seem sorry to work longer and harder than he had intended. "Don't disturb yourself a bit," he wrote in his letter of April 7 to Mrs. Bull. "I will work all my problems out. I am on my own feet. I begin to see the light. My success would have led me astray, and I would have lost the reality that I am a Sannyasin—that is why Mother is giving me this experience."¹⁰ And he of course had nothing but blessings for his old friend and disciple, the Maharaja.

Although Swamiji again and again insisted that man break away from abject dependence upon a Personal God or upon a Savior and stand up free and fearless, he by no means repudiated the path of devotion. As though to underscore this fact, he chose the subject of Divine Love for his additional series at Washington Hall. According to the last-minute newspaper announcements of April 8, the lectures were entitled "Worshipped and Worshiper," "Formal Worship," and

"Devotion and Love." They were given on the evenings of, respectively, Monday, April 9; Tuesday, April 10; and Thursday, April 12. All three were taken down by Ida Ansell, and her second transcripts of them have been published in volume six of the *Complete Works*—"Worshiped and Worshiper" under the title (with variant spelling) "Worshipper and Worshipped," and "Devotion and Love" under that of "Divine Love."

Swamiji's definition of the Personal God—a definition he had often given in effect during his first visit to the West—reconciled in a few words the philosophy of monism and the path of devotion. "You, as I see you," he explained in "Worshipper and Worshipped," "are as much of your absolute nature as has been limited and perceived by me. I have limited you in order to see you through the power of my eyes, my senses. As much of you as my eyes can see, I see. As much of you as my mind can grasp is what I know to be you, and nothing more. In the same way, I am reading the Absolute, the Impersonal, and see Him as Personal. As long as we have body and mind, we always see this triune being: God, nature and soul. There must always be the three in one, inseparable. . . . The universal soul has become embodied. My soul itself is a part of God. He is the eye of our eyes, the life of our life, the mind of our mind, the soul of our soul. This is the highest ideal of the Personal God we can have. If you are not a dualist, but a monist, you can still have the Personal God. There is the One without a second. That One wanted to love Himself. Therefore out of that One, He made many. It is the big Me, the real Me, that the little me is worshipping. Thus in all systems you can have the Personal God."¹¹

And thus Swamiji was by no means contradicting himself when on Sunday afternoon he cried, "What is the God of Vedanta? He is principle, not person. You and I are all Personal Gods!"¹² and on the following evening extolled the worship of the Personal God as a means to the spiritual goal. But this God was not the remote, magisterial monarch as

conceived by most, if not all, dualistic religions. "He is the Infinite, the Ever-Pure, the Ever-Free. He is no judge. God cannot be a judge. He does not sit upon a throne and judge between the good and the wicked. He is no magistrate, no general, nor master. Infinitely merciful, infinitely loving is the Personal God." Again, the Personal God was a God for the strong, a God comprehensible, in fact, only from the standpoint of the spirit. He was the God of all that is apparently evil as well as all that is apparently good. "Face the terrible," Swamiji cried in "Worshipper and Worshipped." "Tear aside the mask and find the same God.... There is none else.... He is the good; He is the evil; He is the beautiful; He is the terrible; He is life; and He is death."¹³

There was a call here for as much manliness as in Swamiji's lectures on jnana yoga or raja yoga, for as much same-sightedness, as much selflessness, and as much freedom from the senses. Further, the way of love was as much a requirement of the present age as the way of reason. "A bird cannot fly with only one wing," he said at the outset of "Worshipper and Worshipped." "What we want is to see the man who is harmoniously developed—great in heart, great in mind, great in deed. We want the man whose heart feels intensely the miseries and sorrows of the world. And we want the man who not only can feel but can find the meaning of things, who delves deeply into the heart of nature and understanding. We want the man who will not even stop there, but who wants to work out the feeling and meaning by actual deeds. Such a combination of head, heart, and hand is what we want. There are many teachers in this world, but you will find that most of them are one-sided. . . . Why not have the giant who is equally active, equally knowing, and equally loving? Is it impossible? Certainly not. This is the man of the future, of whom there are only a few at present. The number of such will increase until the whole world is humanized."¹⁴

In "Formal Worship," Swamiji explained the value of (but did not necessarily recommend) the various stages of worship,

the "kindergartens of religion," through which man passes. "Working through the plane of the senses [through worship of forms and symbols], you get more and more entry into the other regions, and then this world falls away from you. You get one glimpse of that spirit, and then your senses and your sense enjoyments, your clinging to the flesh, will all melt away from you. Glimpse after glimpse will come from the realm of spirit. You will have finished yoga, and spirit will stand revealed as spirit. Then you will begin the worship of God as spirit. Then you will begin to understand that worship is not to gain something. At heart, our worship was that infinite-finite element, love, which is an eternal sacrifice at the feet of the Lord by the soul. 'Thou and not I. I am dead. Thou art, and I am not. I do not want wealth, nor beauty, no, nor even learning. I do not want salvation. If it be Thy will, let me go into twenty million hells. I only want one thing: Be Thou my love!' "15

"To be completely turned into love of God," Swamiji said in "Divine Love," "—there is the real worship! You have a glimpse of that now and then in the Roman Catholic Church—some of those wonderful monks and nuns going mad with marvellous love. Such love you ought to have! Such should be the love of God—without asking anything, without seeking anything.... At last, love, lover, and beloved become one. That is the goal.... All these ideas [such as] 'He is the creator,' are ideas fit for children. He is my love, my life itself—that must be the cry of my heart!"16

This combination of intense, boundless love for the Personal God who is everywhere, who is everyone and everything, with the recognition that in the final analysis—indeed the final realization—there is neither I nor Thou, but only Brahman, the One without a second, was perhaps one of Swamiji's most important contributions to religious thought. The practice of monism became in his teachings not the practice of world negation, but "the vivid and powerful worship," within the world, of the spirit by the spirit—the fearless, selfless worship

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

of the Big Me by the little me. Devotion, at the same time, became the spontaneous expression of the underlying unity of God, soul, and nature; the monistic Reality was its very essence. "Love," Swamiji had said in an Oakland lecture ("The Reality and the Shadow"), "is simply an expression of this infinite unity. Upon what dualistic system can you explain love?"¹⁷

It was no doubt around the time that Swamiji was giving his series of lectures on Divine Love at the Red Men's Building that he told Mrs. Allan that he disliked platform work. For one thing, the lectures were titled in advance. "It is killing," he said. "At eight o'clock I am to speak on love. At eight o'clock I do not feel like love."¹⁸ But if Swamiji had not felt like love before giving any of the three lectures of this series, once he started, his words poured out as from the heart of love itself. It was, of course, always so. Whatever subject Swamiji found himself committed to speak on, his lecture was, literally, an act of worship, an act of divine love. "Just now I am worshipping you," he told his audience during the course of "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?" "This is the greatest prayer. Worship the whole world in this sense—by serving it. This standing on a high platform, I know, does not appear like worship. But if it is service, it is worship."¹⁹ This—the service of man as the actual worship of God himself—was the powerful religion Swamiji taught from so many different approaches and points of view, and it was the religion he made real by exemplifying it with his every breath.

In addition to giving lectures in downtown San Francisco, Swamiji spoke at least once during his stay in the city at the Pine Street Home of Truth and once at the California Street Home of Truth. Unfortunately, we have very little certain information regarding either of these talks, except that the second took place before April 8 and was preceded by a dinner at which Ida Ansell (and surely also Miss Bell, Mrs. Hansbrough, and Mrs. Aspinall) was present. In her early unpublished

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

memoirs Miss Ansell recalled this occasion in a passage which I shall quote in full:

One night, Swamiji was to give a lecture in the Home of Truth and first he had dinner with us. Mrs. [C.W.] Steele [a resident member of the California Street Home] who prepared the dinner, had for dessert some very fine dates, which Swamiji much enjoyed. That night he delivered one of his most forceful lectures. He "threw many bombs" as he expressed it, and told us plainly and frankly just what he thought of us. It was startling, thought-provoking and uplifting. Later, when Mrs. Steele expressed appreciation of the lecture, he replied, "It was your dates, Madam." It was at this dinner also that he surprised us with the remark mentioned in "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?"—"I will say grace to you, Madam; you have done all the work."²⁰

("When I work, I say grace to myself," Swamiji had continued in that lecture. "Praise be unto me that I worked hard and acquired what I have! All the time you work hard and bless somebody else because you are superstitious, you are afraid. No more of these superstitions bred through thousands of years! It takes a little hard work to be spiritual.")²¹

In her later memoirs, as published in the *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, Miss Ansell wrote that in his lecture at the California Street Home of Truth Swamiji rebuked American doctors for advising against the practice of chastity. But, as I mentioned earlier, I have taken as correct Mr. Rhodehamel's memory that this rebuke was contained in "Mind: Its Powers and Concentration," which Swamiji gave in Washington Hall. It is possible, of course, that he spoke twice in exactly the same vein; but of this we cannot be certain.

In any case, the Home of Truth lecture was, as Miss Ansell recalled, a forceful one, and as we learn from Mrs. Allan, it was well attended. The Home occupied a house on the south side

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

of California Street between Laguna and Buchanan—a fashionable block, graced in those days by more than one large stone mansion. Although the Home of Truth house, which is no longer standing, was considerably less than a mansion, it was spacious enough to accommodate, with some squeezing, an audience of well over a hundred people. According to Mrs. Allan, who was present that evening, two rooms on the lower floor had been thrown open for the occasion. “But so many people came,” she related, “that they were crowded into the hallway and even up to the top of the stairs.” Mrs. Allan was among those who sat on the topmost stair, and there, after the lecture, she was spied by Swamiji. “He came into the hall to greet the people,” she said, “and seeing me, he called out, ‘Madam! What are you doing up there among the gods?’”²²

Swamiji's work in San Francisco was virtually finished; he now had enough money, even without the Maharaja of Khetri's stipend, and was ready to rest. “Now, as you say,” he wrote to Miss MacLeod on April 10, “I am going to send [to New York] all the money I have made here. I could do it today but I am waiting to make it a thousand. I expect to make a thousand in Frisco by the end of this week. I will buy a draft on New York and send it or ask the bank the best way to do it. . . . I think I should rest now, although I can have \$100 a week average in this city all along.”²³ Two days later he attained his financial goal. “I have made over a thousand dollars in San Francisco which I am going to send to Mr. Leggett this week in a New York draft in his name,” he wrote in an unpublished portion of a letter to Mrs. Bull dated April 12. “I will still have money left to travel—so you need not feel the least anxiety about me. As about my health, it is so so. Some days good, others bad. . . . The pressure of work and irregularity of food and sleep was tremendous in San Francisco—yet I love it well after all. It is my nature to be at my best when left alone.”²⁴

Thus with the series on Divine Love, Swamiji's public

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

lectures in Washington Hall came to a close. It is known, however—primarily through a reference in Mr. Allan's notebooks—that he gave “a short series of lectures on Bhakti Yoga” in the smaller hall in the Red Men's Building known as Social Hall. What Mr. Allan meant by “short series” is hard to understand. Almost all of Swamiji's lecture series consisted of three lectures, and fewer than three could not, one thinks, be called a series. But however that may be, this “series” was not announced in the newspapers, nor mentioned later; it was no doubt semipublic and attended by a relatively small audience. The first, and possibly the *only*, lecture of the “series,” certainly the only one of which we know the date, was given on the evening of Saturday, April 14, 1900—a memorable date in the history of the Vedanta movement in America, for it was immediately after the lecture that the Vedanta Society of San Francisco was founded.

26

According to Mrs. Hansbrough, it was she who had suggested to Swamiji that he found a Vedanta Society in San Francisco, even as she had suggested that he found one in Pasadena. He was not certain, she said, that either society would last; yet her suggestions would have come to nothing if they had not been in keeping with Swamiji's desire and had not received his consent and approval. It was, in fact, almost inevitable that he would himself want to found Vedanta societies in those places where he had poured out spiritual energy, giving day after day the highest and strongest of his teachings. He would naturally have wanted those teachings to take root and grow, not only in the hearts of the relatively few individuals to whom he taught them, but in a group of individuals, a society, where, undiluted and uncompromised, they would be permanently available to all. To leave behind living vessels of this sort, in which the seeds he had so liberally sown would take root and flourish and from which thousands could thenceforth find

spiritual nourishment, was indeed a necessary part of Swamiji's mission.

There was also another reason why he wanted to found Vedanta societies. Never did he forget the needs of his Motherland. His hope was that students of Vedanta would recognize their debt to India and would send the financial help she so sorely needed. "He felt that he had come to the West for two purposes," Mrs. Hansbrough once said: "to deliver a message and to get help for India. But he was terribly disappointed in the amount of help he got." In California, however, Swamiji found a generosity of spirit that touched him. "He was often asked questions about going to India," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "especially by women students. He used to tell them, 'If you are going to India to see great yogis, don't go. You will see only poverty, filth and misery.'"¹ But despite Swamiji's warning, some still wished to go, their ardor unquenched.

In a heretofore unpublished passage of a letter Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Bull on April 12, two days before the founding of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, he praised Californians for this warmheartedness. "My chief idea in all western work has been to help India," he said. "On New York I and mine have spent the greatest part of our energies, and Indian work *never* had any help from New York—and I do not believe will ever have.... Here in California people are poor—but they come out with their help the best they can and I have several applications every day from men and women to follow me to India!"²

In this same letter, again in a heretofore unpublished passage, Swamiji mentioned specifically (but did not name) two of the Californians who were set upon going to India. "By the by," he wrote, "there is a very clever Scotchman and his Swiss wife here. The man is an inventor, electrician, etc. Just now there is a good chance of his making money by one of his automobile inventions. He is sure to go to the Seviars with his wife if he can succeed in his scheme." (Capt. and Mrs. J. H. Sevier, as has been mentioned earlier, were English disciples

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

of Swamiji and were then in charge of his Himalayan retreat at Mayavati. Who the very clever Scotchman and his Swiss wife were one cannot say, for no one whom we know of today meets that description. Mr. Allan was a Scot, but he was not an inventor or an electrician; nor was Mrs. Allan Swiss, she was English to the bone. No married couple, in any event, ever went from San Francisco to Mayavati.)

But however that may be, one of Swamiji's reasons for wanting Vedanta societies in California was that they would keep alive not only his message but the fire of generosity and sympathy toward India that he had ignited in some hearts. He expected the societies in both southern and northern California to send regularly what money they could to Belur. "Don't be indifferent to the question of sending money to the Math," he was to write several months later to Swami Turiyananda, who was then working in California. "See that money goes certainly every month from Los Angeles and San Francisco."³

While Swamiji's desire to found a Vedanta Society in San Francisco was a condition essential to the event, there was another condition equally necessary: this was the existence of a group of people eager to band together under his leadership. One indication that such a group existed and had discussed the matter with him in advance is to be found in another unpublished portion of his letter of April 12 to Mrs. Bull. Referring to a dispute that was then taking place in the New York Vedanta Society between Swami Abhedananda on one side and Mrs. Bull and the Leggetts on the other, Swamiji wrote, "If you think Abhedananda's stay in New York will create disturbance, I can induce him to come over to San Francisco—he can have all the organization here he wants. I can try at least. I will write him by this mail."⁴ It would seem clear from this passage that a society was in the offing, that the inaugural meeting of April 14 was not a spur-of-the-moment affair but had been under consideration by both Swamiji and a group of his followers for at least a few days.

There are three firsthand accounts of this historic meeting—

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

historic, because the San Francisco Vedanta Society was the second of the two presently existing Vedanta societies established by Swami Vivekananda in the Western world (the first, of course, was the Vedanta Society of New York, which Swamiji founded in November of 1894). Perhaps the most important account of the San Francisco inaugural meeting is its Minutes, but in addition to these we have the eye-witness reports of Mrs. Hansbrough and Mr. Albert S. Wollberg. (Mr. and Mrs. Allan did not attend the meeting. They did not, in fact, become members of the Vedanta Society until after 1903.) Mr. and Mrs. Wollberg had been more or less regular attendants of Swamiji's downtown lectures and certainly enthusiastic and serious ones. Mr. Wollberg, a long-confirmed atheist from the East Coast, had found on hearing Swamiji that he could, after all, believe in God and had promptly become a theist. He and his wife were to be active members of the Vedanta Society for the remainder of their lives, and it is said that Mr. Wollberg moved from theism to monism before he died. His account of the inaugural meeting is a simple statement written in pen and ink on one and a half sheets of letter paper. But simple and brief as it is (and in part misleading), it forms one of the important documents of the early history of the Vedanta Society of Northern California:

The Origin of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco

After the last lecture given by Swami Vivekananda on Raja [Bhakti] Yoga at Social Hall, Red Men's Building on April 14th 1900 Swamiji was approached by me as to the advisability of forming a Vedanta Centre here in San Francisco.

He seemed to be very pleased & said "Why not?" Whereupon he advised it would be well to start it right away.

There was an anteroom adjoining the Hall & those that seemed to be interested attended this impromptu meeting.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Mrs. Hansborough broached the idea of forming a permanent Centre here which met with a universal "Aye." Thereupon the meeting was called to order & Mrs. Dr. Plumb was elected the first President. Dr. Logan who was present thereupon offered the Class his offices at the Corner of Market and Geary Sts for the meetings. Later Swamiji gave several lectures there. As the Class grew in numbers Dr. Logan offered the finished basement of his home at Oak and Steiner Streets for the meetings. There Swamiji gave a number of discourses on the Gita—later on he left for Paris.⁵

Turning again to Mrs. Hansbrough's "Reminiscences," we find more details in connection with the Society's inaugural meeting:

[Dr. Logan] was present the night the San Francisco lectures closed. The Wollbergs were there, but I don't remember whether the Allans were or not. We had asked a Mr. Chambers to invite any to stay at the close of the lecture who would be interested in continuing the study of Swamiji's teachings. He did this, and when the others had left he asked me to tell about the organization of the Los Angeles and Pasadena centers. Then we discussed the organization of a center here, but did not complete the arrangements that night. Dr. Logan then suggested that we meet the next night in his office at 10 Geary Street, which we did, and it was on that night that the organization of the Society was completed. Swamiji held some classes before the Society and he also held some there after he returned from Camp Taylor.

At the first meeting, I suggested to Swamiji that he leave before the meeting opened. He asked me why, and I told him, because I wanted to say some things about him that I would rather he did not hear. So he agreed, and went home. [He was then living in Alameda.] It was

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

not that his staying would have made any difference to Swamiji; my reason for asking this was that I myself would have been embarrassed to speak as I wanted to about him in his presence.⁶

The third and, as I said, perhaps the most important record of this first meeting of the Vedanta Society is its Minutes. These, together with the Minutes of the subsequent meetings, were neatly written in an ornate, feminine hand in a red leather-covered, wide-ruled copybook, which has been preserved in the archives of the Society. The Minutes for Saturday, April 14, 1900, read as follows:

Minutes of the Vedanta Class

About twenty-five persons met together at 8 o'clock on the evening of the 14th of April, 1900, in Social Hall, to discuss the advisability of forming an organization to assist Swami Vivekananda in his work in India and for the purpose of studying the Vedanta Philosophy.

Dr. Plumb was chosen Chairman.

After much discussion it was found that a majority of those present were in favor of forming a class, which they proceeded to do.

After some discussion upon the subject a motion was duly made, seconded and carried that the name of the organization be the Vedanta Class.

Upon motions duly made and seconded Dr. Plumb was chosen as President, Miss Mizener as Secretary and Treasurer, and Mrs. Moore as Reader of the Class.

A motion was duly made, seconded and carried that the dues of the members of the Vedanta Class be \$1.00 per month, and that the amount collected the first month be kept in the treasury for incidental expenses.

A standing vote was taken as to the time for the meeting of the class and Thursday evening found to be suitable to

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

a majority and was thereupon selected, a meeting to be held each week.

Dr. Logan very kindly offered the class the use of his offices until such time as it had a sufficient membership to warrant it in renting a hall, and the class very gladly accepted the offer.

A motion was duly made, seconded and carried that the Secretary be instructed to invite Mr. Nielson [Charles P. Neilson, Swamiji's artist friend] to speak to the class on the Vedanta Philosophy or the Gita.

The President was instructed to authorize the payment of the bill of \$3—for printing, and the bill of \$4—for rent of hall.

There being no further business for consideration the class then adjourned until Thursday evening, April 19th.⁷

Presumably, but not certainly, the "bill of \$4—for rent of hall" was for the rent of the anteroom in which the meeting was held. As for the "bill of \$3—for printing," there are no existing records to indicate what printing this might have been. Also unexplained in any account is the hour at which the inaugural meeting is said in its Minutes to have opened. Inasmuch as the meeting convened after an evening lecture on "Bhakti Yoga," eight o'clock seems improbably early. Miss Mizener, however, may have felt it a seemly hour for a meeting to be held and have written up the Minutes accordingly.

Miss Mizener may have further tidied up history. Mrs. Hansbrough has told us that the first meeting took place in two parts, the second part being held the following night, which would have been Easter Sunday, at Dr. Logan's offices. The above Minutes, however, seem to be as complete as one could wish, and one suspects that Miss Mizener combined the business of both meetings under the date April 14, this being the orderly way to handle the matter. On the other hand, Mrs. Hansbrough's memory may have telescoped the time intervening between the first and second meetings, and the launching

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

of the Society may actually have been carried over to its second regular meeting, which was held five nights later on Thursday, April 19. At that meeting, however, nothing further appears to have been necessary in the way of inaugural business. Its Minutes read as follows:

April 19th 1900.

The Vedanta Class and those interested in the work met together at Dr. Logan's offices at 8 P.M. at 10 Geary St.

Dr. Plumb called the meeting to order.

There was a general discussion as to the advisability of forming classes in Oakland and Alameda, but no definite action taken.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and adopted.

Mr. Nielson then spoke to us upon the Gita, and read portions therefrom.

At the conclusion of such reading a motion was made, seconded and carried that Mr. Nielson be asked to continue the reading of the Gita at the future meetings of the Class.

Upon motion duly made and seconded it was decided that we have one open meeting each month.

There being no further business before the Class, the meeting adjourned until the 26th.⁸

Although the Society was at first called the "Vedānta Class," after about a year the term "Vedanta Society" began to be used off and on in the Minutes. No reason was given for this variation in name, but one finds that Swami Turiyananda (who came to California in the summer of 1900) consistently referred to the San Francisco organization as "the Vedanta Society" in his unpublished letters of this period to Mrs. Hansbrough and others, which I have had the good fortune to read. Further, on the cover of each issue of the *Pacific Vedantin*, a magazine produced by the Society in 1902, is printed "Issued

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

by the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, California.” (The Ramakrishna Mission seal also appears on every cover.) After Swami Trigunatita took charge of the Society in the beginning of 1903, the names “Vedanta Class” and “Vedanta Society” continued for a time to be used interchangeably. Gradually the term “Vedanta Society” took precedence and finally came to be used exclusively. As far as can be discovered, no motion was made, seconded, and passed that the name be permanently changed from “Class” to “Society”; the change simply came about—as was inevitable, for the type of organization had been from the start that of a society.*

*In the *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* by Swami Gambhirananda, published by Advaita Ashrama in 1957, the fact that Swami Vivekananda founded the Vedanta Society of Northern California was not recorded. This oversight will be corrected in the next edition of the *History*.—Ed.

CHAPTER SIX

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

1

By the time Swamiji founded the Vedanta Society of San Francisco he had already moved from the Turk Street flat to the Home of Truth in Alameda, a small town just south of Oakland. Inasmuch as his last known letter from San Francisco was dated April 10, 1900, and his first known letter from Alameda April 12, it would seem fairly safe to assume that he moved to the East Bay on April 11, a Wednesday. According to Mrs. Hansbrough, she, Swamiji, and Mrs. Aspinall left the flat for the last time in the late afternoon, each carrying a small suitcase. (Mrs. Hansbrough had sent on Swamiji's trunk by express. "I may have packed it for him, too," she said, "as I often did.")¹ In the hall Swamiji helped the women on with their coats, and as he did so he spoke those words of appreciation to Mrs. Hansbrough that for all time made up for his many long and articulate scoldings: "Well, you have worked like a demon!"²

They took the Turk Street cable car to Market Street and there, at the foot of Powell, transferred to the larger Market Street car that rattled down to the Ferry Building. (This transfer point, incidentally, was a noisy, bustling spot in San Francisco where Swamiji must have often stood, waiting for a streetcar on his way to the East Bay. In a lecture some seven weeks later, he gave what one can, I think, take to be a picture of himself at that precise point. Speaking of the attainment of yoga, he said, "This is the question: With every sense and every organ active, have you that tremendous peace [in which] nothing can disturb you? Standing on Market Street, waiting for the car with all the rush going on around you, are you in

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

meditation—calm and peaceful? In the cave, are you intensely active there with all quiet about you? If you are, you are a yogi, otherwise not.”³ The ferry to Alameda (a half hour’s ride) connected at the Alameda mole with a railway that made a nine-mile run to a station in the heart of town. From there the three passengers could easily walk to their destination—the Alameda Home of Truth.

Swamiji had been invited to stay at the Home by Mr. and Mrs. George Roorbach and Miss Lucy Beckham, its directors. Although he had not found the Home of Truth in Los Angeles particularly congenial and had felt crowded at the Home on Pine Street, he was not averse to Homes of Truth in general. “He once told me,” Mrs. Allan recalled, “that he thought the work of the Home of Truth was the best then available in the West, and he appreciated the fact that the workers there did not charge for spiritual assistance, as some others did.”⁴ Swamiji seems to have particularly liked the Alameda Home. “He begged to come after we invited him,” Mrs. Roorbach related in later years. “He said he ‘smelled’ over the house and saw that we were pure and said we were worthy of a little help.”⁵

The house, which stood uncrowded by neighbors at 2527 Central Avenue, was a large mid-Victorian dwelling with wide lawns and well-kept gardens—“a beautiful place,” Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Bull on April 12, “surrounded by flowers and green orchards.”⁶ A porch covered with wisteria vines serpentine around its front and sides, Mrs. Allan remembered; and in April this vine would have been in bloom, as would the nearby orchards. The house, a photograph of which is here reproduced, had been loaned to the Home of Truth, in return for its care, by a wealthy family named Barton, who were away in Europe. It has long since been torn down, and except for a large palm tree and a magnolia, under both of which Swamiji, it is said, liked to walk while smoking his pipe, no signs are left of its gardens. (Where the house had stood, the Alameda Hotel, a Spanish-California style structure, stands today.)

“When we arrived at the Home of Truth,” Mrs. Hansbrough

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

continued in her account of Swamiji's move from San Francisco to Alameda, "we were met in the hall by the teachers, Mr. George Roorbach and his wife, Eloise (both of whom were artists), and Miss Lucy Beckham. George Roorbach took Swamiji up to his room on the second floor. It was a fine, big room." ("We gave him a corner room in the back of the house," Mrs. Roorbach later recalled.)⁸ According to an item on the front page of the *Alameda Daily Argus* of Friday, April 13, Swamiji was entertained that evening at a dinner given in his honor at the Alameda home of a Mrs. George H. Perry. And directly after this dinner, he gave a lecture in Tucker's Hall, but of that, more later.

In a sense, Alameda was to San Francisco what Pasadena was to Los Angeles—a fashionable suburb. Although in those days it contained twice as many people as Pasadena (almost the reverse is true today), it was, like the latter, essentially residential, and its residents, though not as boastful as their southern counterparts, considered their town beyond compare as a place to live. They, too, moved amidst gardens and trees in the serene and leisurely fashion befitting dwellers in paradise.

Easily reached by the half-hour ferry and short rail ride from San Francisco [a guide book of the period reads], is the little suburban town of Alameda; population twenty-thousand; one principal business street, and a number of wide, level, well-paved roads, lined on both sides with picturesque houses in all styles of architecture, and varying in size from the tiniest cottage to the most imposing mansion. A double line of rail traverses the town. . . . While the city does not make much claim to the possession of imposing public buildings, it has a number which are worthy of passing notice, chief among them being the City Hall, a handsome, roomy structure, in the Spanish style of architecture, on Santa Clara Avenue. The principal hotel is the Yosemite, at the corner of Park Street, facing directly

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

on the narrow-gauge railroad. Alameda boasts of an opera-house, the possession of its own electric-light plant, a good water supply, and a free public library. When the estuary shall have been completed, Alameda will be an island. [This did not come to pass until 1902.] On this estuary, to the north, there are splendid opportunities for boating and sailing with perfect safety, and along the mole some of the most important sculling matches which have taken place on this coast have been held. . . . Alameda is favored by horsemen, cyclists, and drivers [carriage, not automobile], on account of the splendid pavement of its roads and their unusual width. The streets of handsome homes are bordered by shade-trees. In fact, Alameda is a model suburban town, and revels in garden-like lawns and a floral wealth quite indescribable.⁹

Alameda was not new to Swamiji. Before April 11 he had lectured there at least three, and possibly five, times. His first series, which had been in the nature of "parlor lectures," had been announced on March 16, 19, 20, and 21 on the front page of the *Daily Argus*, one of Alameda's two newspapers, both of which generally gave him marked attention. The most complete announcement read:

THREE PARLOR LECTURES BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Three lectures will be given by Swami Vivekananda under the auspices of the Alameda Cheney Section at the residence of Mrs. George H. Perry, 1424 Oak Street, near Santa Clara Avenue. Subjects; Wednesday March 21, 8 P.M., Mind—its powers and possibilities; Thursday, March 22, 8 P.M., Mind Culture; Wednesday March 28, 8 P.M., Concentration of Mind. Full course \$3. Single tickets \$1. . .

"The Alameda Cheney Section," the *Daily Argus* informed

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

its readers in another connection, "is composed of twelve ladies who attended the lectures of Mrs. John Vance Cheney, delivered in the Adelphian Club rooms last year. The purpose of the section is to study the art of living and to apply it to the service of humanity."¹⁰ In pursuing their study of the art of living, the ladies of the Cheney Section evidently invited various lecturers to speak to them, opening these meetings to the paying public as well. Mr. B. Fay Mills, for instance, had given a lecture under the auspices of the Cheney Section in March. Whether Swamiji actually lectured before the group three times, as announced, is problematic. Only one lecture was reported upon by the Alameda papers, and this not altogether clearly. The item, which appeared in the "Social and Personal" column of the *Alameda Daily Encinal* of March 23, read:

Swami Vivekananda delivered a lecture on "Mind, Its Powers and Possibilities," under the auspices of the Alameda Cheney Section at the residence of Mrs. George H. Perry, 1424 Oak Street, last evening.

"Last evening" would have been March 22, on which date Swamiji had been scheduled to speak on "Mind Culture," not on "Mind, Its Powers and Possibilities." The latter was to have been delivered on March 21. There is no way of knowing whether the above news item was incorrect or whether Swamiji's lecture engagement of March 21 was canceled and his subject transferred to the following evening.

In regard to the third lecture of the Cheney Section series, "Concentration of Mind," scheduled for March 28, we are equally in the dark. The Alameda papers say nothing about its having been given or its having been canceled. There would appear to be no reason, however, for thinking that Swamiji did not give it on the evening announced.

In any event, he had certainly *intended* to speak three times on the subject of raja yoga before the Cheney Section, and he did without doubt give at least one of these talks at Mrs. Perry's

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

house on either March 21 or 22. (This house, incidentally, was moved in later years from 1424 Oak Street to 2005 Alameda Avenue and after its change of location was remodeled, it is said, beyond all recognition.)

In addition to lecturing before the Cheney Section, Swamiji, as has not heretofore been known, gave a series of three lectures at Tucker Hall, delivering the first on April 4. The following announcement appeared often (and with variations) in both Alameda papers:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE HINDOO PHILOSOPHER, ALAMEDA LECTURES

Will be held in Tucker Hall, 1424½ Park Street, near Santa Clara Avenue, the first being given on next Wednesday evening, April 4th. The subject, "The Influence of Surroundings on the Development of Religion." The second of the series will be on the evening of Friday, April 6th, and the third and last on Wednesday, April 11th. Tickets for full course \$1. Single lecture, 50 cents.

The *Daily Encinal* wrote a short article to celebrate Swamiji's coming lecture course and accompanied it by a picture of him seated in his robe and turban—the same photograph Blanche Partington had used for her interview of March 18 in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The article, if one may call it that, read as follows:

LEARNED HINDU

Vivekananda To-morrow Evening

The Swami Vivekananda first came to this country as the representative of the Vedanta philosophy of India at the Congress of Religions at the World's Fair. He is an eloquent and forceful speaker, and seems as familiar with the literature and history of the Occident as he is learned in the philosophy of the Orient. In his teaching of Vedantism

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

he expresses the ideas that all systems of religion and philosophy are based on the love of goodness and truth and will lead to the same goal.

At the Congress of Religions he made a decided sensation, arousing intense interest. He is to deliver a lecture to-morrow night at Tucker's Hall on "The Influence of Surroundings in the Development of Religions."

On the day the above appeared in the *Encinal* (April 3), the *Argus* printed a longer article and accompanied it by one of the photographs taken in San Francisco which showed Swamiji standing in his robe and turban, his left hand on his sash. As did an interviewer in San Francisco, the *Argus* reporter quoted from the pamphlet of Swamiji's Harvard lecture of March 2, 1896; in fact, the entire *Argus* article was, admittedly, a quotation from the introduction by Dr. Charles Carroll Everett (dean of the Harvard Divinity School). Inasmuch as this has not been published in the *Complete Works* and only in part in the *Life*, it may be of interest here. It could have served as a salutary reply to the missionary questionnaire of 1897, which was mentioned in the last chapter.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Sketch of the Expounder of Hindu Philosophy.

Has Attracted Much Attention in This Country.

The following description of the Swami Vivekananda and his work was written by Charles Carroll Everett, D.D., LL.D., of Harvard University, as an introduction to an address by the Swami on "The Vedanta Philosophy of India":

"The Swami Vivekananda was sent by his friends and co-religionists to present their belief at the Congress of Religions that was held in connection with the World's Fair in Chicago. This he did in a way to win general interest and admiration. Since then he has lectured on the same theme in different parts of our country. He has been

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in fact a missionary from India to America. Everywhere he has made warm personal friends, and his expositions of Hindu philosophy have been listened to with delight.

"It is very pleasant to observe the eager interest with which his own people in India follow his course, and the joy that they take in his success. I have seen a pamphlet filled with speeches made at a large and influential meeting in Calcutta, which was called together to express enthusiastic approval of the manner in which he has fulfilled his mission and satisfaction at this invasion of the West by Oriental thought. This satisfaction is well grounded. We may not be so near to actual conversion as some of these speakers seem to believe, but Vivekananda has created a high degree of interest in himself and his work.

"There are, indeed, few departments of study more attractive than the Hindu thought. It is a rare pleasure to see a form of belief that to most seems so far away and unreal as the Vedanta system, represented by an actually living and extremely intelligent believer. This system is not to be regarded merely as a curiosity, as a speculative vagary. Hegel said that Spinozism is the necessary beginning of all philosophizing. This can be said even more emphatically of the Vedanta system. We occidentals busy ourselves with the manifold. We can, however, have no understanding of the manifold if we have no sense of the One in which the manifold exists. The reality of the One is the truth which the East may well teach us; and we owe a debt of gratitude to Vivekananda that he has taught us this lesson so effectively."

Tucker's Hall (or Tucker Hall), where Swamiji gave all his public lectures in Alameda, was located in the Tucker Building, a two-story structure built in 1879 on the southeast corner of Park Street and Santa Clara Avenue—the very heart of town. The hall itself, as Mr. Herman Kihn, vice-president of the Alameda Historical Society and an old-time resident of

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Alameda, has told us, was on the second story, to the right of the stairway as one ascended; offices and living quarters were on the left, that is, on the corner. The ground floor of the building was occupied by a real estate office, a candy store, and various other stores and offices. As for the hall itself, it was a plain, level-floored auditorium, equipped with a stage and about two hundred and fifty movable folding chairs. (Six years later the Tucker Building was so heavily damaged by the great earthquake that the entire second floor, auditorium and all, had to be removed. The ground story, however, was repaired and remodeled, and a portion of it, further remodeled, still stands on the corner, occupied by a drugstore.) The town's largest hotel, the Yosemite, stood across Park Street, and along Santa Clara Avenue the little narrow-gauge train periodically chugged and tooted.

On April 5 the *Daily Encinal* and the *Daily Argus* printed on their front pages fairly long and almost identical reports of Swamiji's lecture "The Influence of Surroundings on the Development of Religions"—his only lecture in Alameda upon which the newspapers wrote at any length. The *Encinal's* article read as follows:

TRUE RELIGION

Hindu Philosopher Gives His Ideas.

Last evening the Swami Vivekananda gave the first of a series of three public lectures at Tucker Hall on "The Development of Religious Ideas."

The speaker dwelt briefly on the similarity of ideas in the minds of orthodox Christians, Mohammedans and Hindus with regard to the origin of their religions. Each believed his particular prophet or teacher to have been inspired in some mysterious way by a God or Gods, who as it were, regulated or influenced the affairs of this world from a distance. The modern scientific mind, on the contrary, instead of seeking for outside or supernatural causes for phenomena endeavored to find cause in the thing or condition itself.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

While at first glance this method of investigation might seem to take from religion some of its vital element, yet in reality it resulted in man finding that the spiritual attributes of deity and the states of mind producing heaven and hell were all within himself, and although the result of this rational modern inquiry might appear to contradict much that had been handed down in the old religious writings such as Bible, Koran and Vedas, yet the contradiction was more apparent than real, for the prophets and teachers of old had true perceptions, but were mistaken only in attributing their experiences to outside agencies, instead of realizing them to be the development and expression of elements in their own souls before unknown and unrecognized.

The lecturer traced some of the common beliefs regarding location of heavens and hells, of various burial rites and customs, and he spoke of the impressions made on the primitive mind that resulted in a personification of the active natural forces in the phenomena with which we are surrounded.

The next lecture will be given to-morrow (Friday) evening. The subject will be "The Formation of God Ideals."

Although the *Daily Argus's* front-page report of the same lecture was largely repetitious of the above, I shall give it here in full for the sake of completeness:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

An Interesting Address by Hindu Philosopher.

He Talks on the Development of Religion.

Swami Vivekananda, the prominent Hindu scholar and philosopher, delivered an address before an attentive audience in Tucker's Hall last evening. His subject was "The Influence of Surroundings on the Development of Religion."

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

The speaker referred to the old idea held by orthodox believers in all countries that their religions were the direct inspirations from a deity who, as it were, regulated or influenced the affairs of this world from a distance.

The primitive man, when his mind was moved by the strange and beautiful phenomena of nature, attributed the wonders that he saw to the power and caprice of an outside God or gods.

The scientific mind, on the contrary, instead of seeking for outside causes for phenomena, endeavored to find the cause in the thing or condition itself. And while at first this method of investigation might seem to take from religion its vital elements, yet in reality it resulted in man finding that the spiritual attributes of God and the states of mind producing Heaven and Hell were here and now within himself.

While modern scientific investigation might seem to contradict the old religious scriptures, yet it was not really so, for the prophets and teachers of old had true perceptions, but were only mistaken in attributing their experiences to outside agencies, instead of realizing them to be the development and expression of element[s] in their own souls, before unknown and unrecognised.

In referring to the evolution of the soul, the speaker said that it was impossible for the mind or soul to begin as a blank and gradually acquire knowledge, for knowledge was simply the reaction and association of ideas and unless some ideas were already there, there could be no reaction.

Swami Vivekananda will deliver the second address of the series to-morrow evening in Tucker's Hall. His subject will be "Formation of God Ideals."

On April 7 the *Daily Argus* noted that Swamiji had lectured as scheduled on "The Formation of God Ideals" but did not report what he had said. The very title of this lecture, however, suggests that it was not unlike "The Soul and God," in which,

in San Francisco, he had traced the evolution of religious concepts.

As for the third lecture of the series, the *Daily Encinal* told its readers on April 12 that Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu philosopher, had "lectured to a good audience last night in Tucker's Hall on 'Man's Ultimate Destiny.' " That was all the Alameda press had to say. Mrs. Allan, however, tells us something more of this particular lecture. It was at its close, she related in her memoirs, that Swamiji made a statement that stunned the audience. "While in Alameda," she wrote, "Swamiji gave public lectures in Tucker Hall. He gave one wonderful lecture 'The Ultimate Destiny of Man' and [after taking us step by step up the heights of Advaita, he] finished by placing his hand on his chest and saying 'I am God.' A most awed silence fell upon the audience, and many people thought it blasphemy for Swamiji to say such a thing."¹¹

Remembering that Swamiji always spoke, as Swami Saradananda once said, "out of his own direct experience," one can only imagine how high his state of consciousness and how vibrant his power must have been when, deliberately and gravely, he spoke those three words. One can also only imagine their impact upon his listeners. It must have seemed to them at the time, for so awed a silence fell, that he was not speaking solely from an Advaitic point of view, that he was not saying, "I am Brahman," but, rather, "I am the Personal God!" A tremendous statement indeed. Had they misunderstood his meaning? One recalls that in his lecture "Meditation," delivered in San Francisco a week or so earlier, he had said (I quote from the first transcript), "Don't you make this mistake. When I say in English, I am God, it is because I have no better word. In Sanskrit, Satchidananda means absolute Existence, Knowledge, and Wisdom, infinite self-luminous Consciousness. No person. It is impersonal. I am never [Rama] but am [one with Brahman, the impersonal, all-pervading Existence]."¹²

Yet Swamiji was a soul so vast, so perfect, so filled with divine power—the power, as he himself said, to liberate with a

touch¹³—that one must place him beside those great Messengers who, as he said in Los Angeles, are “higher than all our conceptions of God” and who can indeed be looked upon as God Himself. “When a man has reached that perfect state,” he said in the lecture (or article) “The Essence of Religion” (published in the *San Francisco Examiner* on March 18, 1900), “he is of the same nature as the Personal God: ‘I and my Father are one.’ He knows himself one with Brahman, the Absolute, and projects himself as does the Personal God.”¹⁴ There are many indications that after he had begun his mission Swamiji was aware of his divine status. Mrs. Allan once related, for instance, that during his stay in northern California one of his women students was complaining, “Oh, if I had only lived earlier, I could have seen Sri Ramakrishna!” Swamiji turned quietly to her and said, “You say that, and you have seen me?”¹⁵ Fully aware of himself as one with Brahman, and aware as well of his prophethood, could not Swamiji say with the ring of total authority, “I am God,” and could he not mean it in the special, personal sense in which the audience, stunned into “a most awed silence,” had understood it?

Swamiji intended to rest for a week in Alameda and then, as he wrote in an unpublished passage of a letter of April 12, 1900, to Mrs. Bull, “go to a place called Stockton.”¹⁶ His earliest known mention of wanting to work for a few days in Stockton—a small but thriving city eighty miles east of San Francisco, where the College of the Pacific (today named the University of the Pacific) was located—is contained in a letter of March 30 to Josephine MacLeod. On April 8 and 10 he again mentioned going to Stockton (his writing of the name appears in the *Complete Works* as “Star Klön”), but after April 12 we hear no more of the plan, and it would seem certain that he gave it up, perhaps because of ill health.

His stay in Alameda did not by any means give him the complete rest that he needed. Aside from lecturing at Tucker’s Hall four times, he crossed the Bay at least twice to lecture in

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

the evening in San Francisco: once on April 12 to deliver his final talk in the series on Divine Love, and again on April 14, to speak on "Bhakti Yoga" and to found the Vedanta Society. (It should be noted here that in their accounts of the inaugural meeting both Mrs. Hansbrough and Mr. Wollberg mention that Swamiji gave some classes or lectures for the benefit of the new Society at Dr. Logan's office. In both cases the inference is that this was before he went to Camp Taylor—that is, in the month of April. But one finds no other references to these talks, and so we can say nothing about them, except that they could not have been held on the evenings of the Society's regular weekly meetings, for as the Minutes attest, Mr. Charles Neilson read on those evenings from the Gita, which certainly would not have been the case had Swamiji given a talk before the group.)

In addition to his public lectures and possible Vedanta Society talks, Mrs. Hansbrough tells us, "Swamiji lectured at the Alameda Home of Truth at least twice";¹⁷ but unfortunately, we know as little of these lectures as we do of those given before the Society, for Mrs. Hansbrough's statement, which I have quoted in its entirety, constitutes the whole of our present knowledge of them. Although the Alameda Home of Truth is itself still in existence, its old records are not. Indeed, the Home possesses no memento of any kind to commemorate Swamiji's long visit there.

Of Swamiji's lectures in Tucker's Hall the *Daily Argus* noted as early as April 11, "Another series of lectures by the Hindu philosopher has been arranged for to be given shortly." The three lectures of this second series were announced duly, and often, in both Alameda papers, the most comprehensive notices appearing, of course, at an early date. That in the *Encinal* of April 13 read as follows:

LECTURES BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The Swami Vivekananda will lecture at Tucker Hall, 1424½ Park street near Santa Clara avenue, Alameda, at

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

8 p.m., each evening. Subjects: Friday, April 13th, Raj Yoga; Monday, April 16th, Concentration and Breathing; Wednesday, April 18th, The Practice of Religion. Admission 50 cents. Course tickets \$1.

This bit of information was all the Alameda papers managed to say about Swamiji's second lecture series. However, Ida Ansell, who had apparently missed the lectures of the first series, was in Tucker's Hall taking notes during the first and third lectures of the second series, namely, "Raja Yoga" and "The Practice of Religion." Her second transcripts of these notes have been published in, respectively, volumes seven and four of the *Complete Works*. As for the second lecture of the series, "Concentration and Breathing," there is no known transcript or report which bears the date April 16, 1900. In volume six of the *Complete Works*, however, one finds four pages of lecture notes under this same title. No information is given of where, when, or by whom these notes were taken, but their similarity to comparable lectures of this northern California period leads one to wonder if they were not taken down at Tucker's Hall on the evening of April 16.

The three lectures of this series were, clearly, concerned with raja yoga, a theme to which Swamiji again and again returned. So much has been said earlier in regard to his teachings on this subject that little more need be added here. One need only note that in Alameda he again defined the purpose and utility of yoga. "The science of yoga," he said in his first lecture of the series, "proposes this, that the one way out is through ourselves. We have to individualize ourselves. If there is any truth, we can realize it as our very essence. We will cease being driven about by Nature from place to place.... Yoga is stopping the *chitta*, the mind-stuff, from getting into these changes. When all this creation has been stopped, [and] if it is possible to stop it, then we shall see for ourselves what we are in reality."¹⁸ (That *if* in the last sentence is perhaps a transcriber's error).

Assuming that the notes in the *Complete Works* entitled

"Concentration and Breathing" represent Swamiji's Alameda lecture of that title, then on the evening of April 16 in his second lecture of the series he spoke on the means of "stopping creation" through the practice of deliberate concentration, which, in turn, has become possible through the preliminary practice of certain breathing exercises.

In an earlier chapter we have discussed "The Practice of Religion," but since this was Swamiji's last lecture in California to be given in a public hall, a few more sentences from it will not be amiss—least of all its closing ones. "Excepting the infinite spirit," he said, "everything else is changing. There is the whirl of change. Permanence is nowhere except in yourself. *There* is the infinite joy, unchanging. Meditation is the gate that opens that to us. Prayers, ceremonials, and all the other forms of worship are simply kindergartens of meditation.... All knowledge you have—how did it come? From the power of meditation. The soul churned the knowledge out of its own depths. What knowledge was there ever outside of it? In the long run this power of meditation separates ourselves from the body, and then the soul knows itself as it is—the unborn, the deathless and birthless being. No more is there any misery, no more births upon this earth, no more evolution. The soul knows itself as having ever been perfect and free."¹⁹

And with those words, spoken in Alameda on April 18, 1900, Swamiji's public lectures in California came to a close.

2

At the Home of Truth Swamiji spent a good deal of time in his room, Mrs. Roorbach recalled; but he also mingled with the people of the Home, most of whom he found congenial and many of whom became his followers. ("The people here are so good to me," he wrote to Mrs. Bull on his arrival.)¹ Other friends and students, such as Mr. and Mrs. Allan and Mr. Rhodehamel, came to visit him. Mrs. Hansbrough and

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Mrs. Aspinall were often at the Home, sometimes staying overnight.

But not everybody at the Alameda Home of Truth approved of Swamiji. His gaiety and total, childlike freedom, characteristic of the *paramahansa*, were disconcerting to some of the members, specifically, Mrs. Hansbrough remembered, to two English housekeepers, one of whom was named Molly Rankin. Like some of Swamiji's English disciples, these two women were of the firm opinion that a spiritual person seldom ate—certainly *never* ate meat—never smoked, and never became ill. It was clear to them that Swamiji was not a spiritual person. "See here," he had said to the Roorbachs, "I must have meat. I cannot live on potatoes and asparagus with the work I am doing!" And so, Mrs. Hansbrough related, "they got meat for him, although they themselves were vegetarians."² And on top of this there were his pipe and cigarettes!

"The inmates of the 'Home of Truth,' " Mr. Rhodehamel wrote in his *Prabuddha Bharata* memoirs, "had occasion to get used to the odour of tobacco while he lived with them. He would usually be up in the mornings before the rest of the family, and lighting his pipe would walk through the unoccupied rooms, filling them with smoke. One imagines their efforts to rid the rooms of the odour of tobacco before time for their usual morning class!"³

All Homes of Truth seem to have had difficulty with Swamiji's pipe. A story in this regard is told in Swami Nikhilananda's *Vivekananda: A Biography*:

The members of the Home of Truth [in Los Angeles] were not permitted to smoke [Swami Nikhilananda writes]. One evening the Swami was invited for dinner by a member of the organization along with several other friends who were all opposed to the use of tobacco. After dinner the hostess was absent from the room for a few minutes, when the Swami, perhaps due to his ignorance of the rule about tobacco, took out his pipe, filled it up,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and began to puff. The guests were aghast, but kept quiet. When the hostess returned, she flew into a rage and asked the Swami if God intended men to smoke, adding that in that case he would have furnished the human head with a chimney for the smoke to go out.

"But he has given us the brain to invent a pipe," the Swami said with a smile.

Everybody laughed, and the Swami was given freedom to smoke.⁴

While Swamiji would no doubt have respected the rule of the Home of Truth had he known about it, at least requesting permission to smoke, ordinarily he had a sometimes childlike, sometimes lordly indifference to rules. Mr. Rhodehamel tells a relevant tale in *Prabuddha Bharata*:

Once while crossing the bay between San Francisco and Oakland, he took the notion to smoke. He was seated with some ladies on the upper deck of the ferry where smoking was prohibited. Drawing a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, he lit one and blew the smoke in playful defiance at the prohibitive sign, "No Smoking." One of his companions quickly warned him, "Swami! Swami! You can't smoke here!... Here comes the officer! Quick—put it out!"

"Why should I put it out?" he drawled in exasperating coolness.

The officer in question caught sight of the offender, and started for him. Swami continued to puff until the officer came up to him. Then he laughingly threw the half-smoked cigarette overboard. The officer looked at him a moment and slowly passed on.⁵

"Smoking was not his only offense in the [Alameda] 'Home of Truth,' " Mr. Rhodehamel recounted in the same article. "The cream for breakfast was missing one morning. It was a

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

mystery as they knew the milk-man had left it. The event was discussed at breakfast. The Swami quietly listened until all had exhausted their wits in their efforts to solve the mystery. Then he coolly informed them that he had drunk it! I imagine," Mr. Rhodehamel added, "that the more conservative members of the 'Home of Truth' were shocked by his whimsical tendency."⁶

They were, in fact, shocked by more than Swamiji's whimsical tendency. Not only was it clear to Molly Rankin and her friends that Swamiji did not *act* the way a spiritual person should act, it was clear that he did not *think* the way a spiritual person should think. There was, for instance, his attitude toward healing. In an article entitled "Swami Vivekananda's Mission to the West," Gurudasa wrote, referring to the Home of Truth, "There is a sect in America that teaches that because Jesus healed the sick, to use one's mental power for healing diseases is the true mission in life."

And then came Swamiji [he continued] and he told them the story of his own master, how during an illness one of his followers had suggested that he heal himself through his own mental efforts. The master had listened. But later he said: "How mean to take one's mind away from Mother to direct it towards this filthy body!" And Swamiji concluded with the startling remark: "Jesus would have been greater, had he not used his powers."

To some of his hearers, especially to hidebound church members, such remarks were shocking. . . . But those who were really sincere. . . to these there was food for thought. And the very startling effect of the words helped them to lift their minds out of the old rut of thinking.⁷

Mrs. Roorbach, who later said "He blew the top out of our minds," was among those who had practiced mental healing; yet she herself questioned its wisdom. "We used to heal a great deal in the Home of Truth," she related. "People

came to us for healing, and I did it too. One time I healed someone of cancer. It was just before I went to Swami, and when I talked to him I told him of this and said, 'Swami, I have absolutely no idea how this was done, I only know I have been using a force which I don't understand and which is too big for me. I am a little afraid of it, and I am going to give it up.' Whereupon Swami smiled and said with a gesture of approval, 'Good. Good.''' (In telling it, Mrs. Roorbach made a broad gesture, such as Swamiji had made those many years before.)⁸

All in all, the Home of Truth, whose religious teachings reached and influenced many people, could not but have changed during his visit, and very possibly his disregard of the Home's regulations, such as his insistence on eating meat and his smoking, was, in some part at least, purposive. He would not have laid down laws for the Home of Truth, nor would he have repudiated any of its teachings; that was not his way. But in every gesture—by what he ate, how he walked, what he said—just by living, he showed these earnest people what spirituality was and what it was not—it was not, for instance, a diet of asparagus.

One finds Swamiji in many moods during his stay at the Alameda Home of Truth. We have seen him breaking rules with what must often have been a mischievous gleam in his eye; in the last chapter we have seen him meditating with, or, rather, *for*, Mrs. Hansbrough to relieve her mind of some oppressive burden; we have seen him in the kitchen with Mrs. Allan, on the two or three Sundays of his stay, acting the role of loving parent with an ill and distraught child, letting her help him prepare Hindu dishes and sharing the finished meal with her. In addition one catches here and there in memoirs and letters glimpses of other moods and other occasions.

We find him, for instance, walking alone in the garden in the early mornings before the others were up or in the late afternoons before dinner. Sometimes a Mr. William Pingree, one

of the teachers, who also served the Home as head gardener, would walk with him. "Swamiji said Mr. Pingree had an intuition of the conversation of trees," Mrs. Hansbrough related. "He used to say the trees talked; he would put his hands on them and say he could understand what they were saying."⁹ In his book *With the Swamis in America*, Swami Atulananda (Gurudasa) tells a sad story of Mr. Pingree and a windmill. It would seem that at one time there had been no rain for weeks and the garden at the Home of Truth was sorely in need of water. To add to the difficulty, the windmill broke down. What to do? To Mr. Pingree the answer was clear:

The other members of the Home had all gathered for breakfast, when the gardener entered the room and in all earnestness requested that they all go into the silence for a few moments, that the windmill showed symptoms of disorder. "Let us treat the windmill," he said; "let us repeat silently: everything is Divine Mind, there is no disorder in Divine Mind, the windmill is in good working order and ready to give us water." The members acquiesced.

The windmill, however, just stood there. "And our simple-minded gardener," Swami Atulananda concluded, "had to undergo the humiliation of calling in a mechanic to put things aright."¹⁰

Yet this new-thought Don Quixote was perhaps not altogether simple-minded. "He was the only member of the Home," Mrs. Hansbrough recounted, "who received pay for his services. He asked for and got his board and room and fifteen dollars a month."¹¹ And then, Mr. Pingree also had the good sense to walk in the cool of the evening with Swamiji, and he was later among those who visited Shanti Ashrama when Swami Turiyananda was in charge.

Another glimpse of Swamiji in Allanada comes to us from Mr. Allan—that big and burly Scotsman, who in his youth

had been an officer in the British Army. "When he was living in the Home of Truth," Mr. Allan related in his unpublished notes, "one day he was pacing the floor, while I stood silently in one corner of the room, watching: suddenly he stopt near me and putting his right hand on my left shoulder said, 'Mr. Allan, we are both of the same caste—we are both of the military caste.' Then he resumed his walk."¹²

Such small events—a comradely touch, a word—cherished for years, for all of life! Mr. Rhodehamel, too, remembered Swamiji's touch. "Again [one] feels the pressure of a friendly arm about him," he wrote years later; "and he knows, for the time being at least, that his efforts are not in vain."¹³

At other times, Swamiji would entertain a group of friends with jokes and stories, or, suddenly growing serious in response to a need or a question, would discourse on some aspect of spiritual reality or spiritual practice. Mrs. Allan, for instance, told of the moonlit evening of Easter Sunday, when a small group gathered on the wide, wisteria-curtained porch. Swamiji sat on the railing, smoking his after-dinner pipe. The air was cool, and someone thought he should have a hat. "All right," he said. "Bring the red one." (This was the hat with ear flaps, Mrs. Allan recalled, that one sees him wearing in the picnic photograph taken in Pasadena.)¹⁴ For a time he joked and told amusing stories. One of these was of how his feet had hurt from wearing shoes when he first came to Chicago in 1893 and of how he was taken to "a lady toe-doctor," who made matters worse. "Oh, my toe, my toe!" Swamiji cried in telling the tale. "Whenever I think of that lady toe-doctor my toe hurts!"¹⁵ (When Swamiji told it, the story was no doubt hilarious, for he was a master storyteller and a master actor as well. Yet, when one thinks about it, it only adds to the poignancy of his first week or so in America in the summer of 1893: he had been virtually alone, too late to register as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions, without visible prospects for the future, hooted at in the streets for his strange clothes. And as if this were not enough, we now learn that he had been tormented by

unaccustomed and ill-fitting shoes and tortured by an inept lady toe-doctor!)

As Mrs. Allan remembered it, it was after the laughter had died down that one of the party asked Swamiji to talk on renunciation. "He smiled," the rough draft of her memoirs reads, "and said, 'Babies, what do you know of renunciation!' Someone said, 'Are we too young to hear of it?' He was silent for a time. Then he talked on renunciation and discipleship in a way that was most inspiring and illuminating. He spoke of discipleship and of entire resignation to the *guru*, which was quite a new teaching to the Western world. 'If you want to be my disciple,' he said, 'and I tell you to go to the mouth of the cannon, you must do it without question.'"¹⁶

That was an evening to be long remembered, but another of Swamiji's conversations at the Alameda Home of Truth stands out as particularly extraordinary, for it was fraught with such power that those few who were present were literally transfixed.

"You asked whether I had ever seen Swamiji in any particularly exalted mood," Mrs. Hansbrough once said during her reminiscences of him, and went on: "One time was at the Alameda Home of Truth. I think this was the most inspiring instance except at Camp Taylor. We were seated at the breakfast table in the Home—Mrs. Aspinall, the two Roorbachs, Mr. Pingree, the two housekeepers, the two gardeners and myself. Swamiji began to talk as we all sat there at the breakfast table. Then someone suggested we go into the front room so that the housekeepers could clear the table. The two rooms were separated only by an archway with curtains hung in them. So five of us went into the front room and the rest went about their affairs: Swamiji, Mrs. Aspinall, the Roorbachs and I took our seats, Swamiji sitting on a chair facing the rest of us. He talked a great deal of his Master that day. Two stories which he said were his Master's I remember, because he directed them at me.

"The first was a story of an old water demon who lived in a pool. She had long hair, which was capable of infinite extension.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

When people would come to bathe in the pool, sometimes she would devour them if she were hungry. With others, however, she would twine a hair around one of their toes. When they went home, the hair, invisible, would just stretch and stretch; and when the old demon became hungry she would just start pulling on the hair until the victim came back to the pool once more, to be eaten up.

“‘You have bathed in the pool where my Mother dwells,’ Swamiji said to me at the end. ‘Go back home if you wish; but Her hair is twined round your toe and you will have to come back to the pool in the end!’ ”¹⁷

(The reader may perhaps know that in the Himalayas near Dalhousie there is indeed a lake where mountain spirits and other beings are said to sport. Called Dain Kund, or the “Magic Pool,” it is set like a jewel in a wide stretch of velvety green turf, inviting the passerby. Very likely it was here that the demon of Swamiji’s story dwelt.)¹⁸

“The other story,” Mrs. Hansbrough continued, “was of a man who was wading down a stream. Suddenly he was bitten by a snake. He looked down, and thought the snake was a harmless water snake and that he was safe. Actually it was a cobra. Swamiji then said to me, ‘You have been bitten by the cobra. Don’t ever think you can escape!’

“Swamiji did not move from his seat once during the whole conversation. None of us moved from our seats. Yet when he finished, it was five o’clock in the afternoon. Later the two housekeepers told us they had tried twice to open the door from the kitchen into the dining room to clear the table, but could not get it open. They thought we had locked it so we would not be disturbed. Even when Swamiji had finished, Mrs. Aspinall was the only one who thought of taking any food. After talking with Swamiji for a few minutes in his room I put on my coat and came back to San Francisco. As we had gone up the stairs to his room, Swamiji had said, ‘They think I have driven them crazy. Well, I shall drive them crazier yet!’ ”¹⁹

And indeed this was not the only time he held the members of

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

the Home of Truth absorbed and motionless for hours on end. One of those members, a young unmarried woman by the name of Fannie Gould, who became an ardent Vedantist and was to spend the autumn and winter of 1900 at Shanti Ashrama, told Gurudasa of Swamiji's stay in Alameda. "She often told me," he wrote, "how Swamiji would keep the members of the Home spellbound when he talked to them about Vedanta. For hours Swamiji would go on and on and the listeners fearing to interrupt the flow of his spiritual outpouring dared not stir. With bated breath they would sit and listen. They were carried off their feet, as it were, by his eloquence, they felt as if they were soaring in a higher sphere, they were entranced. And only after the Swamiji was silent would they feel themselves tied again to this mundane existence."²⁰

Nor was Mrs. Hansbrough the only one who had been fatefully bitten. " 'You have been bitten by the cobra,' Swamiji said one morning [to Miss Gould and others as well], 'the poison will have its effect, you will never be your old selves again, the Master has accepted you.' "²¹ And it is known that when Fannie Gould died, as she did when she was still a young woman, she died with the name of Sri Ramakrishna on her lips.

Swamiji had many friends in Alameda, some of whom he visited. There were, for instance, Mrs. George H. Perry and other members of the Cheney Section. Then there was a Mrs. Betts, whom he mentioned in a published letter of April 20, writing to Miss MacLeod that he had given Mrs. Betts her message. According to a brief notation made in later years by an East Bay member of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, Mrs. Betts's father was an admirer of Swamiji's and attended his San Francisco lectures. It was, in fact, he, rather than his daughter, whom Swamiji visited several times. Unfortunately, both his name and the exact location of his house have been lost; all we know today is that he lived "somewhere on Clinton Avenue on the Bay side of the street." (Clinton

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Avenue then bordered Alameda's south shore; but the tidelands have since been filled and subdivided, and the avenue is today half a mile from the Bay.)

Charles Neilson was another Alameda friend whom Swamiji visited. It is indeed to him that we owe what many feel to be one of the most beautiful, "speaking" photographs of Swamiji that we possess. Among Mr. Allan's papers one finds an account of the circumstances under which it was taken.

"Swamiji with a party of friends," Mr. Allan wrote, "was invited to lunch at the home of Mr. Charles Neilson [1122 Lafayette Street, then also near the south shore]. After lunch they adjourned to the garden, and Swamiji stretched out on the lawn.

"Mr. Neilson, wishing to take a picture of Swamiji, asked him to pose. Swamiji being indifferent about having his picture taken was loath to get up.

"Mrs. Emily Aspinall, one of the party, said, 'Swami, Mr. Neilson wants to take your picture, why not let him?' Swamiji then stood up in front of the summer house and Mr. Neilson took the picture, and that is how Swamiji has the flowers [actually a vine-covered lattice] for a background. . . ." ²²

It can be added to Mr. Allan's account that Mr. Neilson took two pictures of Swamiji, the first of which has not been generally known; it shows him looking not at all pleased. According to Mrs. Allan, someone then said, "Oh, Swami, please smile for us!" Whereupon, Swamiji smiled, and as he did so the second photograph, of which Mrs. Allan once said, "You will see everything in it," was taken. ²³ I am reproducing both pictures here: the cross one and the all-inclusive one.

One does indeed find everything in Swamiji's smiling picture, and it is small wonder; for throughout his stay in Alameda he was in an exceedingly exalted state of mind. All anxiety in connection with his work had long since fallen from him. As we have seen, he had sent enough money from Los Angeles to defray the expenses of the Math's critical lawsuit; the muddled Math accounts, which had earlier been a source of despair,

had been straightened out by Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda, and Swamiji was pleased with the hard work of his brothers. "I had nice letters from Brahmananda and Saradananda," he had written to Mrs. Bull on March 4; "they are all doing well. They are trying to bring the municipality to its senses; I am glad."²⁴ And again on March 7, "I am very much reassured by all the news I since received from India."²⁵ In the letter to Miss Macleod dated in the *Complete Works* "April, 1900," but more probably written in March he wrote, "I had nice notes from Saradananda; they are doing beautifully over there. The boys are working up; well, scolding has both sides, you see; it makes them up and doing. . . . They have planned and are successfully working famine works by themselves without my help. . . . All this comes from the terrific scolding I have been giving, sure! They are standing on their own feet. I am so glad. See Joe, the Mother is working."²⁶

In regard to the trouble seething in the New York Vedanta Society, he was not greatly concerned. (Nor need we be. The difficulty, the details of which are not entirely clear, involved a complicated dispute over the policy to be followed by the Society. Swami Abhedananda held one view, Mrs. Bull, Mr. Leggett, and Miss MacLeod another. Everyone but Swamiji was much upset.) "Mother will do Her work—I need not worry," he wrote to Mrs. Bull on April 12. (I quote from an early copy, which differs somewhat from that in the *Complete Works*.) "For me—alone and drifting about in the will current of the Mother, has been my life. The moment I had tried to break it, that moment I was hurt. Her will be done. Her power is on you," he added with his unshakable faith in Mrs. Bull, whom he had earlier placed in charge of his work on the East Coast. "I am sure She will lead you to what is right. . . .

"I am happy, at peace with myself," he continued, "and more of the Sannyasin than I ever was. The love for my own kith and kin is growing less every day—for Mother increasing; memories of long nights of vigils, with Sri Ramakrishna under the Dakshineswar Banyan are waking up once more—and

work? what is work? whose work? whom to work for? I am free. I am Mother's child. She works, She plays—Why shall I plan? What shall I plan? Things came and went, just as She liked, without my planning, in spite of my planning. We are Her automatons. She is the wire puller.”²⁷

Just as this letter bespoke the great peace in which Swamiji was living on his arrival in Alameda, so a single sentence revealed the vastness of his being, when in reply to Mr. Allan's jovial greeting—“Well, Swami, I see you are in Alameda!”—he had gravely said, “No, Mr. Allan, I am not in Alameda; Alameda is in me.”²⁸ But perhaps the most revealing utterance of all is a letter he wrote to Miss MacLeod on April 18, which expresses his transcendent state of consciousness in words that seem to have been formed just this side of Silence. “It is just like a voice out of Samadhi,” Sister Nivedita wrote of it years later to Mary Hale.²⁹ And it has indeed become known as one of the most beautiful and sublime of all Swamiji's letters. It has often been quoted both in full and in part; nevertheless I shall quote it here almost in full, for only Swamiji's own words can express the state in which he stood, it seems, on the very threshold of the Absolute, steeped in divinity. (The original letter, incidentally, was in later years carried away by a gust of wind when on ship deck Miss MacLeod pulled it from among her cherished mementos of Swamiji to show to some new-met fellow passengers.)

... I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won. I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great deliverer.

“Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore.”

After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice; the same

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless—the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling.—“I come Lord, I come.”—“Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou Me.” “I come, my beloved Lord, I come.”

Yes, I come. Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter peace. I leave none bound, I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me or I enter into freedom in the body, the old man is gone, gone for ever, never to come back again!

The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away; the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind.

You understand why I do not want to meddle with Abhedananda. Who am I to meddle with any, Joe? I have long given up my place as a leader—I have no right to raise my voice. Since the beginning of this year I have not dictated anything in India. You know that. Many thanks for what you and Mrs. Bull have been to me in the past. All blessings follow you ever. The sweetest moments of my life have been when I was drifting; I am drifting again—with the bright warm sun ahead and masses of vegetation around—and in the heat everything is so still, so calm—and I am drifting, languidly—in the warm heart of the river. I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet—for fear of breaking the wonderful stillness, stillness that makes you feel sure it is an illusion!

Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst of power. Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come. Mother, I come, in thy warm bosom, floating wheresoever thou takest me, in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland, I come—a spectator, no more an actor.

Oh, it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon everything, sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows—without fear, without love, without emotion.—Peace that one feels alone, surrounded with statues and pictures.—I come, Lord, I come.

The world is, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations without exciting any emotion. Oh, Joe, the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful; for things are all losing their relative proportions to me—my body among the first. Om That Existence!...³⁰

Swamiji wrote this letter on the day of his final public lecture in California. Two days after he wrote again to Miss MacLeod. "I shall start for Chicago on Monday [April 23]. A kind lady [almost certainly Mrs. Collis P. Huntington] has given me a pass up to New York to be used within three months. The Mother will take care of me. She is not going to strand me now after guarding me all my life."³¹

But as it happened, Swamiji did not use his railway pass until more than five weeks later.

3

It was on the eve of his scheduled departure for Chicago that Swamiji decided to go instead to a place called Camp Taylor in Marin County, north of San Francisco. In her "Reminiscences," Mrs. Hansbrough tells of this sudden change of plan.

"One Sunday evening [April 22] we were all sitting in the Home of Truth," she recalled, "and Mrs. Aspinall was conjecturing where each of us would be a week hence: Swamiji in Chicago (I had already made his train reservations for him), I in Los Angeles, they [the Aspinalls] at Camp Taylor in Marin County. Then, turning to Swamiji, she said, 'You had better

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

change your mind and go with us.' And Swamiji replied, 'Very well; and Madam (indicating me) will also go.'"¹ And thus, without ado, one plan was canceled, another made.

"I ought to have started [for Chicago] today," Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale the next morning, "but circumstances so happened that I cannot forgo the temptation to be in a camp under the huge redwood trees of California before I leave. . . . Again after the incessant work I require a breath of God's free air before I start on this bone-breaking journey of four days. . . . I start tomorrow to the woods. Woof! get my lungs full of ozone before getting into Chicago. . . . I have finished work. Only a few days' rest, my friends insist—three or four—before facing the railway."²

In 1900 "Camp Taylor" was a misnomer for the camp at which Swamiji decided to spend "three or four" days. Actually, the spot was a small, private camp situated near Camp Taylor and rented by Mr. Louis M. Juhl, the German restaurateur, who, as we have seen, was a member of the California Street Home of Truth and was later to become a prominent member of the San Francisco Vedanta Society. (Today, Camp Irving, as the site was called, lies well within the large area known as Samuel P. Taylor State Park, which was established in 1946, but in 1900 the private camp site and the large resort hotel of Camp Taylor were two separate and distinct things. The former, however, was sometimes referred to by members as "Camp Taylor," for the name "Camp Irving" had no public meaning.) When Mr. Juhl and his family were not using his camp, he frequently offered it to one or another of his friends. In the spring of 1900 he had given the use of it to Miss Lydia Bell, who in turn had invited Mrs. Aspinall, Mrs. Roorbach, Ida Ansell, and, without immediate success, Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough to be her guests. Miss Bell, Eloise Roorbach, and Ida Ansell had arrived at the camp on Sunday, April 22, carrying with them only the faintest of hopes that Swamiji would follow. It was thus with delighted surprise that they learned from Mrs. Aspinall, who arrived two days later, that

he was indeed coming. "We spent the day preparing for him in great joy,"⁸ Miss Ansell wrote in her original memoirs. As it turned out, however, the campers suffered a disappointment.

In her "Reminiscences," Mrs. Hansbrough has told of the events, or mishaps, that prevented Swamiji from arriving when he had first intended. "We set out from the Alameda Home of Truth on Tuesday morning [April 24]," she recounted. "When I went into Swamiji's room he had on the English hunting suit which someone on the East Coast had given him. He was putting on the detachable cuffs which men wore in those days. I had not intended to go to Camp Taylor, but was planning to return then to Los Angeles. I told Swamiji that I would go with him on the ferry to Sausalito and say good-bye there.

"He took off his cuffs and dropped them in the bureau drawer. 'Then,' he said, 'I go to Chicago.' Of course I at once said that I would certainly go to Camp Taylor, and we started off shortly afterward."

There were four steps in the journey from Alameda to Camp Taylor. First, one took a train to the Alameda mole; second, one crossed the Bay to the San Francisco Ferry Building; third, from the Ferry Building one took a big, luxurious ferry for a half-hour trip to Sausalito; fourth, at the Sausalito wharf one boarded the narrow-gauge train to the camp. In the spring of 1900 only two trains a day carried passengers from Sausalito to Camp Taylor: the morning train that left on week days at 7:40 and an evening train that left around six. Further, there was only one ferry from San Francisco that connected with the morning train; this left at seven, and if one missed it, one missed the trip. To carry the matter back to Alameda, the ferries between that town and San Francisco ran, at best, only once every half hour, as did the trains that served them. Thus in traveling from Alameda to Camp Taylor it was of supreme importance to catch a proper train on the first step of the journey.

"The brief discussion I had had with Swamiji about

leaving him at Sausalito," Mrs. Hansbrough continued, "had been just enough to make us miss the broad-gauge train; we arrived at the Park Street Station just in time to see it pull out. Mr. Roorbach, who was with us, said we could probably catch the narrow-gauge train, which was just a few blocks away. So we hurried to the proper street. This train was just getting under way as we arrived. I called to the conductor on the back platform, who called back, 'If you'll run, I'll wait for you.' The train was there within a few yards of us, and I looked at Swamiji. He simply said, 'I will not run.'

"Well, there was no further chance of getting to Camp Taylor that morning, so we went back to the Home of Truth. On the way back I remarked that we had missed the train because there was no engine hitched to our cars. Swamiji [upon whom this sly dig at his refusal to run was not lost] turned to me and said, 'We couldn't go because your heart was in Los Angeles. There is no engine that can pull against a heart. Put your heart into your work and nothing can stop you.' It was a tremendously significant statement, and it has been vivid in my memory all these years."

(In hearing this story from Mrs. Hansbrough, Miss Ansell evidently misunderstood it. In her published memoirs she relates that Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough literally sat for some time in a train that had no engine. Fortunately, we have the correct story in Mrs. Hansbrough's own words, taken down as she spoke them.)

"The Aspinalls had gone on ahead of us to Camp Taylor," Mrs. Hansbrough continued, "and I discovered when we missed the train that my baggage was missing. Later I found they had taken it up with them. After the missed trains and the loss of time, I had once more decided to go back to Los Angeles, but the next day I had to go up to Camp Taylor to recover my luggage. When I told Swamiji I would have to go up for my baggage, he remarked, 'Strange, Mother's dragging you up there, when you tried your best not to go.' When I was there Mrs. Aspinall tried to make me promise that I would not

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

go to say good-bye to Swamiji when I got back to the city: she said I would surely prevent him from getting there a second time. But when I returned with the baggage, Swamiji said, 'Well, come with me to the Camp for a week; we won't stay longer.' When I finally had departed for the south [several weeks later], he told someone, 'She had to go back because the babe (Dorothy) wanted her.' "

A full week passed before Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough again set out for Mr. Juhl's camp. The only known hints of what detained them so long are contained in three published letters written by Swamiji during this interlude. "Sudden indisposition and fever prevent my starting for Chicago yet," he wrote to Mary Hale on April 30, 1900. "I will start as soon as I am strong for the journey."⁴ And to Sister Nivedita on May 2, "I have been very ill—one more relapse brought about by months of hard work."⁵ On the same day he wrote to Mrs. Blodgett of Los Angeles: "Dear Aunt Roxy, . . . I am down again with nerves and fever after six months of hard work. However, I found out that my kidneys and heart are as good as ever. I am going to take a few days rest in the country and then start for Chicago."⁶ As published, none of these letters have a return address, but almost certainly Swamiji spent this week of illness and fever at the Alameda Home of Truth—a much better place in which to be ill than a camp, and one can only think that his having missed the train on the morning of April 24 was, after all, a stroke of good fortune.

On Wednesday, May 2, Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough again set forth for Camp Taylor. Whether they started in the morning or afternoon is not made entirely clear in any memoir, but probably—even considering that Swamiji had already written at least two letters that day—they left in the early morning. Again, he wore his English hunting suit, which, according to Mrs. Allan, consisted in part of a Norfolk jacket. What kind of trousers and hat Swamiji wore, we are not told.

This time they caught the proper train and arrived duly at the Alameda wharf, where they boarded a ferry for San

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Francisco. "I had packed Swamiji's things, bedding, etc., in two big telescope baskets," Mrs. Hansbrough related, "and Mr. Roorbach undertook to handle them. When we got to the ferry, Mr. Roorbach walked on ahead with his bulky load. As I mentioned before, he and all the others in the Home of Truth were vegetarians; and as Swamiji saw him struggling with the big baskets he said, 'Boiled potatoes and asparagus can't stand up under that!' We had had asparagus tips and potatoes for dinner the night before." Mr. Roorbach, however, evidently stood up manfully, and the various connections between train and ferry, ferry and ferry, ferry and train were managed without a hitch.

In Sausalito, Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough, entering upon the last leg of the journey, boarded the narrow-gauge train of the North Pacific Coast Railroad. The distance between the rails of this particular narrow-gauge track was three feet, as opposed to the standard gauge of four feet eight and a half inches; and the locomotive and cars were proportionately diminutive. In 1900, as I have learned from an authority on the subject, Gorge H. Harlan, this railroad was in deplorable condition, and, although the company possessed some large and splendid locomotives, only the small ones could be safely (or less dangerously) used on the crumbling roadbed. These brave little engines, for which the term "choo-choo train" seems apt, sported a huge funnel-shaped stack, consumed quantities of cordwood, and tooted a shrill peanut-stand whistle at crossings and around the numerous bends of the road. Although the train generally proceeded at a cautious and tedious rate from Sausalito to the end of the line at Cazadero, some eighty-three miles north, derailments and overturns were frequent. The view from the car windows, however, was delightful.

"After the train left the little town of Sausalito," Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, "we were soon traveling through wooded country along the bank of a stream, and in the peaceful atmosphere Swamiji began to relax almost at once. He was

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

sitting next to the window so that he could look out, and he began to sing softly to himself. 'Here in the country,' he said, 'I am beginning to feel like myself.' "

In the book *Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods* by A. Bray Dickinson there is a description of the route (which no longer exists) as it was at the turn of the century and as Swamiji saw it:

Kaleidoscopic scenes continued to charm and delight the traveler as trains pulled away from the pier below Sausalito's steep hillside. There were tide flats with their reeking odors and house boats tied up to rotten piling. Mount Tamalpais rose in the background, reflecting the morning sun rays above the lesser hills spotted with groves of oak and madrone. . . . Rails traversed the length of lovely Ross Valley, where little streams flowed through fields of golden poppies and sky-blue lupine. Scattered along the way were villages half hidden in woods: Corte Madera, Larkspur, Tamalpais, San Anselmo. . . . The train crossed ridges with slopes blanketed by thickets of manzanita, wild lilac, and winter red toyon.

Little engines. . . puffed and snorted, stuttered, and spun driving wheels as they dragged loads up long grades and in and out of ravines. The trains would. . . roll over creaking trestles, through smoke-filled tunnels, and around hairpin curves where passengers saw their locomotive headed in an opposite direction from themselves. . . .

A 1,300-foot tunnel at the top of White's Hill was constructed on a steep grade which made it difficult for a laboring engine completing the climb. To make matters worse, the water dropping from springs made the track wet and slippery. Many long trains became stalled inside the tunnel while a sweating fireman furiously stoked his fire to get up more steam. The passengers nearly suffocated from the smoke.

As cars glided down the hill into redwood filled Lagunitas Canyon passengers frantically raised their

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

windows for fresh air. The train followed shadowy Paper Mill Creek and then rolled past the old paper mill all the way out to Tomales Bay.⁷

But a mile or two before coming to the old paper mill, the train had stopped to let Swamiji and Mrs. Hansbrough alight at what was known as Irving Flag Station, a point in the sweet-smelling woods by Paper Mill Creek, twenty miles (about an hour-and-a-half train ride) from Sausalito.

According to an old railroad map, the flag station was some two hundred feet beyond the entrance to Mr. Juhl's camp. The camp abutted on the railroad embankment and ran parallel to it, occupying a strip of level land about one hundred and fifty feet long and forty to sixty feet wide between the track on the north and the sloping bank of the creek on the south. Just here, the stream, whose overall course was northwest, flowed due west, and just here also, the narrow, unpaved county road, which had been running along the south bank of the stream, turned due north and crossed it on a wooden bridge, forming the camp's western boundary. At the camp's eastern end the land dropped sharply from track to stream, and the trees and brush that grew in this sloping, uninhabitable wilderness formed a natural barrier. On the north the land continued to rise steeply behind the railroad, sheltering the area from wind and helping to seclude it.

The railroad, the camp, the stream, and the county road, to name them in their north-to-south order, lay in a narrow valley (or broad canyon) between moderately high hills. This was not mountain country: the camp was only 135 feet above sea level, and the highest peak of the surrounding hills was a mere 1,466 feet. The canyon and the lower slopes were thickly wooded with broad-leafed trees—oak and bay, maple, alder, and willow—and, towering over all, were stands of lordly redwood, through which sunlight shafted as through high cathedral windows. Flowering bushes of many kinds grew in abundance, as did tall ferns and wild berry vines. White azaleas tinged

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

with faint pink and yellow flourished luxuriantly along the banks of the stream, and in May, champagne-colored iris, red and yellow columbine, blue monkshood would have been everywhere in bloom. Indeed the whole canyon was a luxury of flowering woodland. But the hills that rose above it were bare, lifting themselves free of foliage to lie grass-green and buttercup-gold in the springtime sun.

On entering the camp one found the kitchen immediately to one's right. It consisted of a small cast iron stove, backed by a forked tree, which supported a box-cupboard and shelves and from which hung pots, pans, a kettle, and various cooking utensils. A large, domed-top steamer trunk held additional supplies and equipment. Somewhere in the vicinity of the kitchen must have been a water tap, for, as Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, water was piped to the camp for cooking and bathing. Just beyond the kitchen was what Mrs. Roorbach described years later as the "dining-room set up"—a crude wooden table and two board benches. A trail led from the entrance to the far end of the camp, where, in Swamiji's time, a small grove of redwood trees served as a chapel for meditation and sometimes for a class. In the area between the kitchen and the grove stood the tents.

A few photographs taken at the camp in 1900 have been found among the papers of Mr. and Mrs. Allan. One of these, reproduced here, was taken by a Robert Notman Miller some three months after Swamiji had left. It shows the kitchen and dining room with Eloise Roorbach standing at the stove. (The young woman shown seated on one of the benches is the wife of the photographer, holding her infant son in her lap.) As shown here, both the kitchen and the dining room were shielded from the road and bridge by a canvas fence, and high above the table an awning was stretched like a hammock between the trees. But according to Ida Ansell's memory, this fence and awning must have been hung later in the year. "The dining room," she recalled, "was right in the open. There weren't any canvas walls."⁸

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Aside from its historical interest, this photograph has a special value, for with its help the spot on which Swamiji's tent stood has recently been pinpointed. The story of this discovery is perhaps worth telling. In September of 1948 a group of devotees from the Vedanta Society of Northern California took Miss Ansell to revisit the camp site in order to verify its location. (Earlier, they had taken Mrs. Roorbach to the same place for the same purpose.) Miss Ansell recognized the spot, though she found it less wooded than it had been in earlier years. "The shrubs and bushes were very thick then," she recalled, "and when one entered the camp from the road, one could see nothing of the tents. . . . The women's tents were just below the railroad tracks, at the foot of the embankment, and were set about eight or ten feet apart. There were three: Mrs. Hansbrough's [and Mrs. Aspinall's], mine and Miss Bell's, and Mrs. Roorbach's. Directly across from Miss Bell's tent and a little to the right, that is, a little toward the kitchen, stood Swamiji's tent."⁹ (Mrs. Roorbach, who had also recognized the spot, had similarly described the placement of the tents: "Swamiji had a little tent to himself," she had said. "It was out further from the embankment than ours and down nearer the dining room and kitchen spots, because he wanted to be alone and we didn't feel like coming too close to him.")¹⁰

Equipped with this information and the photograph of the kitchen, a fellow member of the Vedanta Society of Northern California and I drove to Camp Irving one day in September of 1969. We carried with us maps, charts, all available memoirs, cameras, a tape measure, a shovel, and a box of heavy-duty plastic bags. We set out fairly early in the morning, thinking to avoid picnickers and Park Rangers, for our mission (the nature of which will become clear) might not have seemed altogether lawful, and would certainly have seemed odd.

Irving Picnic Area, as the site is now called (no overnight camping is allowed), is very different than it was when Swamiji was there. Not only have many trees and shrubs been cleared away to make a large open space, but the old bridge, the old

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

road, and the trestle are gone. From the new county road, a wide paved driveway leads into the camp site and runs its length to the old "meditation grove," where now (1969) sits a barbecue grill. A public rest room—a small green house—stands on the approach to the old bridge. (The new bridge crosses the stream a hundred feet or so to the west.) A few picnic tables, benches, and litter cans are scattered about. But despite these changes, the spot is lovely still: many trees grow tall along the bank of the stream, their branches meeting overhead; the air is fresh and redolent of the woods, the water is clear. When there are no automobiles parked about and when no picnickers turn up their transistor radios, one can feel oneself to be deep in the silent woods, and one can believe that Swamiji was once there, talking of God, meditating.

The first part of our mission was to locate as exactly as possible Swamiji's tent site. To do this we had first to find the old kitchen, which no one had done before us. The only possible tree seemed to be a forked bay tree growing near the old road and near the stream, its bark mossy with age and its base about fifteen feet in circumference. But this could not be the kitchen tree, we told each other, for, viewed from any angle, its right-hand fork did not curve in conformity with the tree in the photograph. Then suddenly my friend pointed out that the bay tree had a stump on its right side which had once been a third fork, and this fork *could* have curved to exactly match the right-hand fork of the kitchen tree. A close inspection of the photograph showed that the kitchen tree had indeed had three forks, not two, as it had seemed at first. So this, then, *was* the tree. This ground where we stood had been Swamiji's kitchen; just here had been the little stove; just there, the dining room. We began pacing off yards, taking pictures, consulting maps and manuscripts, measuring.

Our next step was to locate the exact spot of Miss Bell's tent. This we were able to do without much trouble. Almost directly opposite her tent (Miss Ansell had said) and "a little to the right toward the kitchen," had stood Swamiji's. And, to be

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

sure, the site, thus located, was just where, measuring from the kitchen, we had thought it should be. (This spot was indeed almost inevitable; for his tent could not have been pitched much nearer the kitchen without being almost in the dining room, nor could it have stood further from the kitchen without encroaching upon the stump of a huge and ancient redwood.) As we reckoned it, his tent would have stood a little to the right of this stump (possibly a towering tree in 1900) and would have been set back a little from the bank of the stream.

Now came the second part of our mission—the part requiring the shovel and the plastic bags. My friend scraped away the loose top soil from the approximate center of the place where Swamiji's tent had almost certainly stood and then shoveled clean earth into the bag that I held open to receive it. Then we smoothed over the hole, leaving no discernible dent in Samuel P. Taylor State Park. We repeated this procedure down by the stream, filling another bag, this time with creek-bed gravel. This done, we drove seven miles west to the Vedanta Retreat at Olema. There at the monastery we deposited our holy earth, treasure which was later to be imbedded in a monument to Swami Vivekananda.

But to go back to the days when that earth was made holy, there exist, aside from Miss Ansell's oral description of Camp Irving, three firsthand accounts of Swamiji's two weeks' stay there: one from Ida Ansell herself, one from Mrs. Hansbrough, and one from Mrs. Roorbach. In addition, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Allan, who visited now and then (and once sent Swamiji a case of bottled mineral water), jotted down a few notes. Of these several records, Miss Ansell's memoirs are the most full, and the following story, much of which will be familiar to readers of *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, is largely based on it. From the unpublished accounts, however, many new bits of information will help to illumine this period of Swamiji's life, when, as he wrote on leaving Alameda, "I am going to throw off all worry, and glory unto Mother."¹¹

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Through Mrs. Hansbrough's memory, as well as Miss Ansell's, we see him on his first night under the redwoods. "Swamiji built a fire on a spit of sand that ran out into the stream," the former recalled, "and we all sat around it in the quiet night and Swamiji sang for us and told stories, such as those about Suka Deva and Vyasa." "I close my eyes," Ida Ansell adds, "and see him standing there in the soft blackness with sparks from the blazing log fire flying through it and a day-old moon above."¹² (The moon was in fact three days old, and thus in the early evening was still high in the west.) In her original, unpublished, memoirs (written in 1947) Miss Ansell recalled in a passage that differs a little from the published version: "We had a glorious meditation around the camp fire. He said to us, 'You may meditate on whatever you wish, but I shall meditate on the heart of a lion. That gives strength.' . . . It was a never-to-be-forgotten night. The profound stillness of the forest, the beauty of the fire, and most of all—Swami, serene and majestic, evidently very happy to be there, free from lectures and crowds of people. Though he was tired and needed a rest, how unutterably grand he was! 'We end life in the forest, as we begin it,' he declared. 'But what a world of experience lies between the two states!' I cannot remember the details of what he said, but I can still feel the great peace and power of our meditation that night whenever I think of it."¹³

Someone remembered a few more details of what Swamiji had said that first night and later told them to Gurudasa, who in turn quoted them in his article, "Swami Vivekananda's Mission to the West": " 'Now,' [Swamiji] said, 'imagine that you are yogis, living in the Indian forest. Forget your cities, forget everything. Think only of God. See,' he said, pointing to the stream flowing nearby, 'here is Mother Ganges.' And they lighted the Dhuni and sat around it and he taught them how to meditate and to make Japam. And facing the stream he would shout: Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom! Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom! until that sound vibrated in every mind and the world

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

was forgotten and the soul soared into regions unknown before.”¹⁴

The next day there was a trace of rain; and the day following that, which was Friday, May 4, there was more than a trace. Indeed, according to Miss Ansell (who inadvertently skipped over May 3 in both her published and unpublished memoirs), it rained on Friday all day. Though Swamiji felt ill and had a fever that morning, he talked to the five women for hours, sitting on Miss Bell's cot in the tent she and Miss Ansell shared. That night the rain continued, and Swamiji's fever worsened. He became very ill, so ill that he made a will (neither his first nor his last), in which, Miss Ansell said, he left “everything to his brother monks.” Mrs. Hansbrough and Mrs. Aspinall nursed him. “I can see Mrs. Hansbrough now,” Miss Ansell wrote in her first memoirs, “heedless of the pouring rain, putting some extra protection over his tent, which was almost opposite ours.”¹⁵

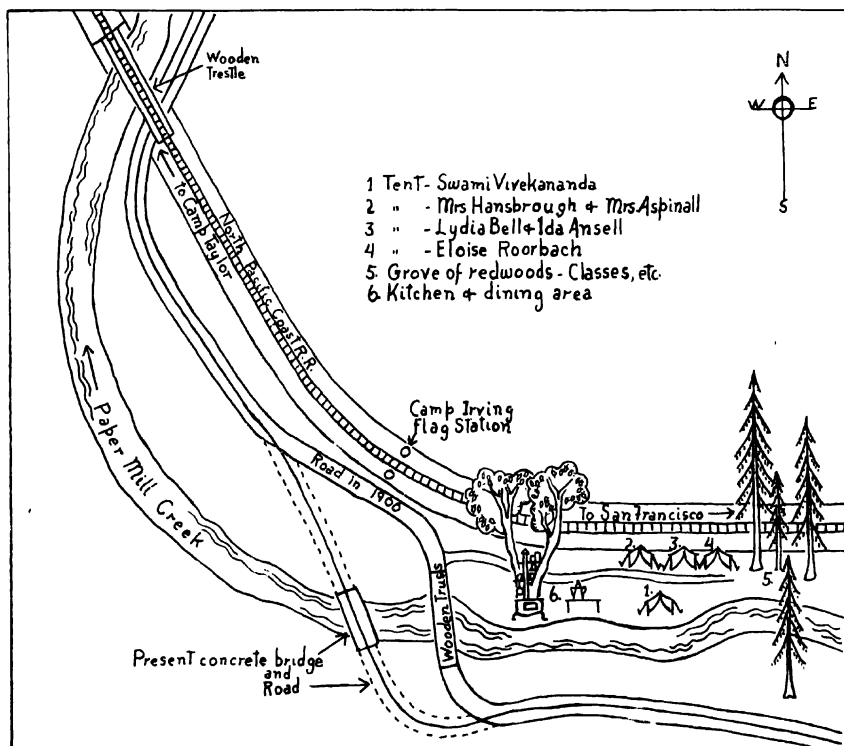
Mrs. Hansbrough probably had as little sleep that night as Swamiji. The rain had driven her from a bed under the trees into Mrs. Aspinall's tent, which was not, it turned out, a water-tight shelter. “Mrs. Aspinall,” she related, “had some printed mottoes such as the Home of Truth people often put up. She had pinned some of these to the sloping roof of the tent. Of course wherever the pins were, the tent leaked, and that night I found water dripping steadily on my forehead from ‘Love Never Faileth.’ ”

That was perhaps the worst night the campers spent. Within a day or two Swamiji recovered, and we do not hear of his being again seriously ill at the camp. One cannot, however, say much for the weather. It was too early in the year for consistent sun and warmth. It rained once again (on Thursday, May 10) and was often cloudy; on the other hand, it was often clear, and during the day the temperature was almost always in the sixties. The moon, in its bright fortnight—a crescent when Swamiji arrived and full before he left—was a presence every night, sometimes known only by a veiled glow, sometimes

threading through islands of clouds, but often sailing free in an open sky.

In 1900 the camp was not without neighbors. A number of wooden buildings associated with a tannin mill stood among apple trees and rose bushes on a stretch of level ground across the road. There was also a large general merchandise and grocery store for the convenience of the workmen, and a rose-covered cottage rented to a Miss Ella McCarthy, who, it so happened, was a friend of Eloise Roorbach's. But these buildings were not visible from the camp, and whatever sounds may have come from them would have been absorbed by the intervening woods. The days were serene and still, and there was very little travel on the county road. Later in the summer, Sunday bicyclers would pedal past on their way to the picnic grounds at Camp Taylor, but in early May the traffic was sparse even on weekends and almost nonexistent during the week.¹⁶ As for the railroad, the little trains, it is true, would roar past practically on top of the campers, the railway embankment rising a mere ten feet or so above the level of the tents—"so close," Eloise Roorbach remembered, "that the train shook us. It made an awful racket."¹⁷ But as a rule, this fuming, snorting beast did not bear down upon the camp more than four times a day—twice from the south, twice from the north—and for all its uproar, it left behind only the fragrant smoke of burning fuel-wood.

Life at the camp settled into a simple routine. Swamiji, as we learn from Mrs. Roorbach, was generally up with the sun, which rose around five o'clock. "My tent was close enough to his," she said, "so that I could hear him chanting in the early morning. He would chant by the hour. Sometimes it was very low. I would sneak out and walk down toward the kitchen so I could hear him better. What he chanted was always again and again, 'Truth is one, sages call it by various names.'"¹⁸ Perhaps this was indeed what Eloise Roorbach heard; but it would seem more likely that in the still, pristine day as the sun rose through the trees Swamiji chanted from various Sanskrit



CAMP IRVING, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

scriptures and hymns in that language of the gods, of which she understood, she said, not a word.

A little later the others rose and perhaps dipped into the stream. For the most part Paper Mill Creek was shallow—so gently flowing and clear that in a contemporary photograph every pebble on its bed is as sharply visible as though seen through air alone—but here and there were deep pools, one of which, Mrs. Hansbrough recalled, was near the camp. "There was a delightful pool in the stream for bathing," she said, "which all of us used except Swamiji, who found the water too cold." (But he would have braved that cold if necessary, and at least once he thought it might be. "I remember," Ida Ansell related, "that once Shanti [Mrs. Hansbrough] went walking in the creek—she was a daredevil. I was walking on one bank holding her hand; Swamiji was on the other side just ready to plunge in if anything happened to her. He was concerned about her and said to me, 'That's a very gingerly hold!'"¹⁹)

"We would usually have breakfast sometime between seven-thirty and eight," Mrs. Hansbrough said; and for this they gathered in the kitchen-dining area. The campers' meal-taking was not always unobserved. Miss Ansell tells of an American Indian boy who was doing some work in the vicinity and who one morning stood watching as they ate. Later Swamiji talked to him, and the boy, who had not been offered any coffee, made the comment: "Black man like coffee, white man like coffee, red man like coffee." "This amused Swamiji very much," Miss Ansell wrote. "He requested that the boy be given some coffee, and all the afternoon he kept repeating the boy's remark and laughing."²⁰

"About ten or ten-thirty," Mrs. Hansbrough recounted, "Swamiji would hold a meditation, which generally took place in Miss Bell's tent, as she had requested." Mrs. Hansbrough said very little more about these morning sessions, and we learn from Mrs. Allan, in whom she confided, that she disapproved

of them. "Mrs. Hansbrough thought Swamiji should rest," Mrs. Allan wrote, "as he had done so much lecturing and should not be asked to talk or meditate with the students, but Miss Bell wanted him to do so, and he acquiesced. Mrs. Hansbrough did not attend these meetings. One morning when the other students had gathered in the tent Swamiji went into the open-air kitchen and asked if she was not coming to meditation. She replied, 'I can't come just yet; I'm busy cooking. I'll come later.' Swamiji said, 'That's all right, you do not need to meditate; I'll meditate for you.'"²¹ (One finds this not improbable repetition of an incident that occurred in the Turk Street flat also told in Miss Ansell's published memoirs in connection with Camp Taylor. There, however, one reads that Swamiji excused Mrs. Hansbrough with the words, "Well, never mind; our Master said you could leave meditation for service.")²²

The morning meditation was not always held in Miss Bell's tent, but sometimes in the redwood-grove chapel at the far end of the camp. "I remember," Mrs. Roorbach later said, "that we each chose a different little spot within this grove to meditate in."²³

(Two other photographs that were taken at the camp after Swamiji had left were presumably, though not certainly, taken in this meditation grove. In both, Miss Lydia Bell is the central figure. Surrounding her in the first picture are, from left to right, Mrs. Emily Aspinall, a Mrs. Schultz, Ida Ansell, and Eloise Roorbach. The second photograph does more justice, one imagines, to Miss Bell, who does not seem to have come out too well in the first. Here Mrs. Carl F. Petersen sits on her right and Mrs. Schultz, one of her students, on her left. Neither of these two women visited the camp when Swamiji was there. Mrs. Schultz drops out of the history of the Vedanta movement in California altogether; Mrs. Petersen, however, was among those who were to play an active and important part in the early growth of the San Francisco Society.)

We learn a few details of Swamiji's morning talks from Miss Ansell's memoirs, both published and unpublished, both written and oral. "He had been invited to the camp to rest," she said, "but all morning he would sit on a cot in Miss Bell's tent, and we sat on the floor around him, and he talked all the morning. He would talk of philosophy and religion, telling many stories, comparing Indian and American customs and answering questions. He told of his hopes for a better understanding of the East and the West and their mutual benefit thereby. He told of his love for Thomas à Kempis and how he had traveled all over India with two books, the *Gita* and *The Imitation of Christ*."¹

Of Swamiji's talks at Camp Taylor Mrs. Roorbach also told a little: "He often said everything is one; Divine Mother is in everything," she recalled; "and he insisted for one of his teachings that we look upon every relation, whether brother or husband, or father, or mother or sister, as Mother regardless of sex. We were to tell ourselves that everyone we saw was Mother.

"You know," she continued, "in India they are more frank than we are in the West and Swami was very open with us, almost childlike in some of the things he said, and one day he said this startling thing to us: 'In my first speech in this country, in Chicago, I addressed that audience as "Sisters and Brothers of America," and you know that they all rose to their feet. You may wonder what made them do this, you may wonder if I had some strange power. Let me tell you that I did have a power and this is it—never once in my life did I allow myself to have even one sexual thought. I trained my mind, my thinking, and the powers that man usually uses along that line I put into a higher channel, and it developed a force so strong that nothing could resist it.'

"At another time he spoke of the regard we must have for all approaches to worship, and he said this: 'The primitive

man worships the idol (he said fetish), and he worships that for a long time, and he looks at it and looks at it. One day he will be looking at it when suddenly behind the idol will appear the spirit, and he will see that, and thus the worship of the idol leads him to the sight of God.' ”²

In speaking of Swamiji's most exalted moods, Mrs. Hansbrough mentioned three occasions that stood out in her memory: There was the special day on the hilltop in Pasadena when he had talked absorbedly for six hours until the air became “just vibrant with spirituality”; there was the even more special day at the Alameda Home of Truth when again he had talked for some six hours without interruption; and there were unspecified times at Camp Taylor which, according to her, surpassed the others. One indication of the special luminosity of Swamiji's mood during his days at the camp is contained in an answer he gave to a question or, rather, a statement of Miss Bell's. The incident is told by both Miss Ansell and Mrs. Hansbrough in almost identical language, and I give here the latter's version, simply because it has not been heretofore published:

“One day after the meditation in Miss Bell's tent, Miss Bell remarked, ‘This world is an old schoolhouse where we come to learn our lessons.’

“ ‘Who told you that?’ Swamiji demanded. She could not remember.

“ ‘Well, I don't think so,’ he declared. ‘I think this world is a circus ring in which we are the clowns tumbling.’

“ ‘Why do we tumble, Swami?’ Miss Bell asked.

“ ‘Because we like to tumble,’ was his answer. ‘When we get tired, we will quit.’ ”³

Throughout his San Francisco lectures Swamiji had reiterated the theme that “the whole universe is a vast play.” “Play! God Almighty plays. That is all,” he had cried in “The Goal.” “... You are having fun, playing with worlds and all that. ... It is all fun. There is no other purpose.... I am the man that is going to be hanged. I am all the wicked. I am getting

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

punished in hells. That also is fun.”⁴ All this and more was contained in Swamiji’s brief reply to Miss Bell: “We are clowns tumbling.” Only from a high Advaitic viewpoint could such words be meaningful, and it seems clear that in California and perhaps particularly during the last two months of his stay, he was seeing men and women not as captives in Maya, inching painfully toward freedom, but, literally, as God Himself playing at joy and at misery for the sheer, wonderful fun of it. Swamiji was himself consciously playing. “I have no aims, no want, no purpose,” he had said in “The Goal.” “I come to your country, and lecture—just for fun. No other meaning.”⁵ And one is reminded of his description of the activity of an illumined soul: “After realization,” he had said to an Indian disciple, “what is ordinarily called work does not persist. It changes its character. The work which the Jnani does only conduces to the well-being of the world. . . . About the motive of the actions of such personages only this can be said—‘Everything they do like men, simply by way of sport.’”⁶ But while Swamiji’s hard work was by way of sport, he also played in ways recognizable to the ordinary onlooker as play—though of an uncommonly joyful kind. He did not spurn the little things; rather, he made them shine.

“After the morning meditation and talk, he would be interested in the preparations for dinner,” Miss Ansell recounted. “Sometimes he helped. He made curry for us and showed us how they grind spices in India. He would sit on the floor in his tent with a hollow stone in his lap. With another smooth, round stone he would grind the spices much finer than we can do with a bowl and chopper. This would make the curry quite hot enough for us, but Swami would augment it by eating tiny red-hot peppers on the side. He would throw his head back and toss them into his mouth with a great circular movement of his arm. Once he handed me one of them, saying, ‘Eat it. It will do you good.’ One would eat poison if offered by Swamiji, so I obeyed, with agonizing result, to his great

amusement. At intervals all the afternoon he kept asking, 'How is your oven?' ”⁷

Swamiji no doubt had his reasons for introducing a fire inside Miss Ansell—it may have been his way of impressing her mind, which, as she later admitted, had been lost in devotion to Miss Bell—but he made it up to her by cooking rock candy especially for her, remarking as he stood by the stove stirring it, “The longer you boil the sugar, the whiter it becomes and all the impurities are removed.”⁸

According to Mrs. Roorbach, he also made candy flavored with sesame seeds, and Mrs. Hansbrough tells that often in the evenings or late afternoons he would make chapatis, mixing flour with the pure water of the stream and slapping the dough into big, flat, unleavened patties that he would cook over the coals of the camp fire. Generally, this would be a fire built on the tongue of sand that jutted into the stream, where all Swamiji had to do for water was dip a ladle into the crystal current. His fire would be small and efficient. “One day I built a big fire,” Mrs. Roorbach recalled. “Swami didn’t like it. He said, ‘All that wood is enough for a funeral pyre!’ He undid it and built a small one.”⁹

The women did most of the cooking most of the time, and now and then, they taught Swamiji a new trick. Mrs. Roorbach, who was a good cook, once prepared some asparagus (that favorite of the Home of Truth) and made some mayonnaise to go with it. This last, Swamiji liked. “Show me mayonnaise,” she quoted him as having asked her, and of course she showed him. “We were tickled almost to death to do anything for him,” she said. “He was so like a child that we took complete care of him and made his full plans for the camp and cooked for him. He was sick there once, not the time he was *very* sick, but just slightly sick, and he said, ‘I must have swallowed a fly.’ We laughed a little at him, because we knew he didn’t really know what was going on in his stomach any more than he knew the time or the value of money.”¹⁰

But to return to the meals at the camp, they were “jolly

and informal, with no end of jokes and stories," Ida Ansell recalled. She went on to say that at breakfast one morning Swamiji, himself free from convention and pleased with Mrs. Hansbrough's carefree spirit, reached over and took a little food from her plate. "It is fitting that we should eat from the same plate," he said; "we are two vagabonds." And, according to Miss Ansell, it was during one of the meals at Camp Taylor that he remarked to Mrs. Aspinall that if she had lived on the highest mountain she would have had to come down to take care of him. With which she agreed.¹¹

(One learns very little about Emily Aspinall from the memoirs of this period, and nothing at all has come down to us from her own pen. Yet she was by Swamiji's side during almost his entire stay in northern California: she had greeted him at the Pine Street Home of Truth when he had arrived in San Francisco from Los Angeles; she had helped keep house for him at the Turk Street flat; she had served him in any way she could at the Alameda Home of Truth, and now, under the rough and simple conditions of the camp, she was again taking care of him. Later, she was to see him in San Francisco at least once before he left for the East Coast. Quiet and serious, she was simply there to serve him, as though indeed destiny had so ordained.)

In the afternoons Swamiji and some of the women would go on long walks through the woods. "We would walk along the road," Mrs. Roorbach recalled, "and then we would take trails leading off from it and walk back into the hills. We didn't talk much on the walks; we just quietly went along here and there. There were woodchoppers in that vicinity, and it was said that they were not a very good type of people, but I was so convinced that I was in the presence of the Lord that nothing bothered me. There were rattlesnakes—even that didn't bother me. Not far away was a small hotel; we would go there once in a while for supplies. But Swamiji didn't go with us often; he was very quiet. He wanted to be quiet. The railroad track crossed the road north of the camp and then

crossed the stream over a high trestle. Sometimes on the way to the hotel we would walk over the trestle with Swamiji, but he didn't like to do that, so we generally walked underneath the trestle."¹²

In 1900 this hotel, together with adjacent camping and picnic grounds, all of which were located about three-quarters of a mile downstream from Swamiji's camp, comprised Camp Taylor. I am including in this book a photograph taken of the hotel in August of 1900. It was possibly from the footbridge shown here that Swamiji, taking a gun from a group of young men who were unsuccessfully shooting at a number of eggshells strung together and bobbing about in the current of the stream hit a dozen or so with as many shots. Returning the gun to the astonished young men, who had challenged him to try his hand at this difficult sport, he assured them that he had never before handled firearms. The secret of his unerring aim lay, he told them, in the concentration of his mind.¹³ The locale of this incident, which is narrated in the *Life*, is not certain, but shooting at bobbing eggshells was just the sort of thing young men would be doing at Camp Taylor in 1900.

The guests at the resort could not have failed to note and ponder the occasional appearance of a majestic, dark-skinned Hindu in an English hunting suit. It is not surprising therefore that strangers sometimes wandered into Swamiji's camp, curious to see what manner of place it was. Eloise Roorbach tells of a woman who thus "turned up one day." "Swamiji," she said, "took one look at her, and was so horrified by what he saw that he backed into his tent and disappeared." Mrs. Roorbach told another story relating to a stranger at the camp: "We were all walking toward the meditation clump of trees," she said, "when Swamiji stooped and picked up a little comb, a woman's comb, and asked, 'Does this belong to any of you ladies?' We each examined it and said, 'No, not mine.' 'What!' he exclaimed, 'it doesn't belong to any of you?' Whereupon he dropped it like a hot coal."¹⁴

(One might ask here, as I have asked, why it was that

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Swamiji, who saw only God in all beings, was so horrified by the woman and so repelled by a stranger's comb. I asked this question of a senior swami of the Ramakrishna Order, and he replied: "To one who lives on so high a plane as Swamiji, sometimes the vision is of God and sometimes it is a clear vision, through and through, of the superficial person. As for the comb, Swamiji would have picked up the comb as an act of service; but sannyasins never touch such things as a woman's comb. So when he found that it didn't belong to any of the women there, he just dropped it.")

Returning from their walks, the campers would soon prepare the evening meal, Swamiji often helping. After eating, they would sometimes stroll near the camp in the twilight. "I remember climbing up the little embankment," Eloise Roorbach said, "and we would walk up and down the track with him." But soon it would grow dark and chilly, and they would sit around a blazing camp fire. "The wonderful things he talked to us in the evenings!" Mrs. Roorbach exclaimed. She did not, however, elaborate, and it is only from Ida Ansell that one learns a little, though very little, of those evenings by the fire.

"The grand climax of the day's activities was the evening fire-side talk and the following meditation," she wrote in her published memoirs. "After telling stories and answering questions [and, Mrs. Hansbrough adds, "insisting that each of us tell a story"],¹⁵ Swamiji would give us a subject for meditation such as 'Firm and Fearless' before beginning to chant. One morning he inspired us with a talk on 'Absolute Truth, Unity, Freedom' and the subject for the evening meditation was 'I am All Existence, Bliss and Knowledge.'"¹⁶ And thus, the campers meditating with Swamiji under the trees in the moonlight, the only sounds the stream singing to itself and owls solemnly conversing, the day would come to a close.

"At the weekends there were visitors," Mrs. Allan wrote in her notes on Camp Taylor. She was making a firsthand observation, for she and Mr. Allan were present on both weekends (there were only two). Who the other visitors were, she does

not say. But while, on the one hand, visitors came to the camp on weekends, on the other hand, two of the regular campers left. Early on Saturday mornings Miss Bell and Miss Ansell would board the train for San Francisco, where Miss Ansell would give a music lesson on Saturday afternoons and Miss Bell would deliver a lecture at the California Street Home of Truth on Sunday mornings, her young devotee happily taking shorthand notes. Sunday afternoons they would return to the camp. On the second and last weekend of Swamiji's stay Miss Bell entrained for the city on Friday, leaving Ida to follow the next day.

"When I was getting ready to take the train as usual," Miss Ansell recorded in her published memoirs, "Swamiji said to me, 'Why do you go?' 'I have to go, Swami,' I replied. 'I have to give a lesson.' I have always regretted the answer," she continued, "for the dollar I received for the lesson was not the motive for going. The real motive was Miss Bell's lecture." Characteristically, Swamiji did not press her to stay nor question the reason she gave for going. "Then go," he said, "and make half a million dollars and send it to me for my work in India."

"He took me up the steep steps to the railroad track and flagged the train for me," she recounted. "There was no station and the train stopped only on signal. Swamiji's carriage was magnificent. His eyes were always turned skyward, never down. Someone said of him that he never saw anything lower than a telegraph pole. When the engine passed us, as the train slowed down, I heard the fireman say to the engineer, 'Hellow! Who is this sky pilot?' I had never heard the expression and was puzzled at first as to its meaning. Then I realized that it must mean a religious leader, and that it was evident to any one who saw him that Swamiji was such a leader." Then she boarded the train.¹⁷

That had been on May 12. Only a few more days remained to be with Swamiji in the deep quiet of the woods, to listen to his marvelous talk, to eat his curry and chapatis, to joke

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

and laugh with him, to hear him chanting in the early morning, to sit near him when he meditated, to be carried as on a great wave into a realm of joy and peace that one could not otherwise have even imagined.

The exact date on which he left the camp is not known. We do know, however, through a heretofore unpublished letter, that he was in San Francisco on May 18; thus he and Mrs. Hansbrough must have flagged down a southbound train on the sixteenth or seventeenth of May and, boarding it with the two cumbersome telescope baskets, have headed for Sausalito and the ferryboat that would take them back across the Bay to the city. Swamiji had lived under the redwoods by Paper Mill Creek for at least two weeks (perhaps a day or two longer), and, as Mrs. Hansbrough said, "He really enjoyed his stay."

5

But much as Swamiji had enjoyed camping under the redwoods, two weeks of rest were not enough to fully restore his health, which had suffered so bad a relapse at the end of April. Returning to San Francisco, he went at once to visit his friend Dr. Milburn H. Logan, who, with his family, lived at 770 Oak Street in a large, three-story frame house on the northeast corner of Oak and Steiner streets—a location in the same district of the city, broadly speaking, as that of the Turk Street flat. The house (today numbered 510 Steiner) still stands, but has been divided up into apartments, its exterior defaced in the process. Luckily, a snapshot, which is here reproduced, was taken before this remodeling took place; it shows the house as it had been when Swamiji stayed there and when, in 1901 and 1902, it was the meeting place of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco.

It was from this house that Swamiji wrote on May 18 to Mrs. Bull, who was then in London. His letter was in reply to a long one of hers that was concerned with financial matters

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and replete with motherly advice.¹ Swamiji's letter, which has not heretofore been published, reads as follows:

San Francisco

18th May 1900

My dear Mother, Many thanks for Joe's and your letters. I have again a bad relapse—and struggling out of it this time I am perfectly certain that with me all diseases are nervous. I want rest for 2, 3 years—and not the least bit of work between. I will take rest with the Seviers in the Himalayas.

Mrs. Sevier gave me 6000 Rs. for family—this was distributed between my cousin, aunt &c. [8,000 Rs.? See Swamiji's letter of August 6, 1899, to Mrs. Bull, chapter two.] The 5000 Rs. for buying the house was borrowed from the Math funds. Do not stop the remittance you send to my cousin, whatever Saradananda may say to the contrary.—Of course I do not know what he says.

I have long given up the idea of a little house on the Ganges—as I have not the money.

But I have got some in Cal [Calcutta] and some with the Leggetts and if you give a thousand more that will be a fund for my own personal expenses, as you know I never took Math money, as well as for my Mother. Kindly write to Saradananda from yourself to give up the little house plan. I am not going to write any more for weeks yet, till I completely recover. I hope to get over [to Europe] in a few weeks from now—it was a terrible relapse. I am with a Doctor friend and he is taking every care of me.

Tell Joe that going amongst different people with message also does not belong to the Sannyasin—for a Sannyasin is quiet & retirement scarcely seeing the face of man.

I am now ripe for that physically at least—if I can't

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

go into retirement nature will force me to it. Many thanks that temporal things have been so well arranged by you.

With all love to Joe and yourself—

Your Son²
Vivekananda

(In the *Pacific Vedantin*, and in the *Life*, it is said that a Dr. William Foster also took care of Swamiji at this time. The name has no meaning to us today, except as an indication that another physician was called in. According to the San Francisco Directory for 1900, Dr. Foster's offices were at 1510 Market Street. This tells us that he was not one of Dr. Logan's assistants; but beyond that negative bit of information, we know at present nothing about him.)

Swamiji's visit to California was drawing to a close. Yet, as he wrote in another heretofore unpublished letter from Dr. Logan's house, a number of things still detained him. Perhaps, in addition to his poor health, not the least of these was his desire to speak before the young Vedanta Society of San Francisco, which had been earnestly and faithfully holding its meetings. His letter, which was addressed to Swami Abhedananda and which I give in full below, has been made available through the kindness of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math in Calcutta. It bears no date, but there is a note on the original which reads—probably in Swami Abhedananda's handwriting: "Rep[lied] 23/5/1900." For the letter to have arrived in New York by May 23, Swamiji must have written it by May 19 at the latest. It reads:

770 Oak Street
San Francisco, Cal.
c/o Dr. Logan, M.D.

My Dear Abhedananda

I am very very glad to hear about the new home of the Vedanta Society—As things stand I will have to come to New York direct from here—without stoppage—but it

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

will be two or three weeks yet I am afraid. Things are coming up so fast that I can not but change my plans and stop a few more days.

I am trying my best to get one of you for a flying visit to this Coast—it is a great country for Vedanta—

Get all my books and clothes etc in your home—I am coming soon—My love to Mrs. Crane. Is she still living on beef-steak and hot water? Miss Waldo and Mrs. Coulston write about the publication of a new edition of Karma Yoga. I have written to Miss Waldo all about it—The money in hand from the sale of books ought to be spent of course.

Do you see my books and clothes all safe there. They were with Mrs. Bull in Boston.

With all love³ Vivekananda

Back in San Francisco, Mrs. Hansbrough again felt drawn to South Pasadena, where her small daughter awaited her. This time there was no counter-pull in her mind, for her service to Swamiji was now done. "After returning from Camp Taylor," she related, "I stayed with a brother-in-law of mine, Jack Hansbrough, for about three days and then went back to Los Angeles. I saw Swamiji every day before I left, and twice the last day. Then he was ill in bed. I stood at the foot of the bed and said good-bye to him. 'Come and shake hands,' he said. 'I never make a fuss over people even when I have known them many years.' I assured him that I had certainly not expected him to make any fuss over me. 'The Lord bless you and keep you,' he said. And I departed."

That should have been the end; but Mrs. Hansbrough spoiled the elegance of that farewell by characteristically leaving behind a suitcase. She did not, at least, go back for it. "After all the false starts for Camp Taylor, I was not going back for *that*; so I asked Mrs. Aspinall to get it when she had an opportunity and send it on to me. She told me later that when she went for it, Swamiji remarked, 'So she left that,

did she? Take it out of here!' and he gave it a push with his foot."⁴

"After I had left San Francisco," Mrs. Hansbrough continued, "Swamiji took another brief vacation trip somewhere outside the city with a Dr. Miller before he left for the East Coast." Here again the similarity of the names Miller and Hiller gives us trouble. One finds in the memoirs of Mrs. Clinton French (quoted from earlier) a mention that Dr. Albert Hiller, concerned over Swamiji's health, took him away to his cabin in the Mount Shasta region for a few days of complete rest. Most probably, this is the vacation trip that Mrs. Hansbrough, meaning Hiller by Miller, had in mind; for there seems to have been no other time during which Dr. Hiller could have taken Swamiji away from the Bay Area. Beyond these two scanty references, we know nothing about this trip to Mount Shasta, except that Swamiji must have taken it (if he took it at all) between May 18 and 24. He was, we know, in San Francisco on May 18 (writing to Mrs. Bull), and on May 24 he was also in the city, writing on that day a letter to Sister Nivedita (in which he answered a number of questions pertaining to Hindu mythology) and on that evening lecturing to the Vedanta Society. At the most, therefore, he could have spent five full days in the Mount Shasta region—a wild, extensive, and beautiful mountainous area in the northernmost part of California.

But whether or not Swamiji went to Mount Shasta for a few days' rest, he seems to have made Dr. Logan's home his headquarters during the last two weeks of May. "Dr. Logan was a man of middle age at that time," Mrs. Hansbrough once said, "and was apparently devoted to Swamiji. He was very helpful to him."⁵ Just when the doctor began attending Swamiji's San Francisco lectures we do not know. He first stepped into our view at the inaugural meeting of the Vedanta Society, already filled with enthusiasm for the ideals of Vedanta and happy to be able to provide the newborn society with a meeting place. He was at this time an energetic and vital man of forty-four

who had made his way in the world with such admirable speed and diligence that eight years earlier he had been written up at unusual length in a book of biographical sketches of prominent, or at least outstanding, men of the Bay Area. "We have entered somewhat more fully into his biography than is customary," the editors of this book wrote in 1892, "for the reason that the history of Dr. Logan is of great value, especially to the young, as showing what may be accomplished, even at an early age, by energy and application, when combined with natural talent."⁶ A brief story of Dr. Logan's early life will not be out of place here, for Swamiji stayed many days in his home, under his medical care.

When he was eight years old, Milburn Hill Logan came with his parents, James and Unity Logan, from Centralia, Illinois, to California. There were at the time four children in the family: the eldest was a boy of thirteen, the youngest an infant. Arriving in California, they settled for a time in Oakland, where, in a manner not made clear by the biographers, Mr. Logan was robbed of nearly all he possessed. The family then moved to Napa County and with their remaining money bought a fifty-acre farm on the outskirts of the town of Saint Helena. Mr. Logan soon became a prominent citizen. By trade both a carpenter and an undertaker, he shortly built up, it was said, "one of the leading furniture and undertaking houses of the county." In the meanwhile young Milburn attended school at Saint Helena and in his eighteenth and nineteenth years took private instruction in physics, hygiene, physiology, and the principles and practice of homeopathy. While it seems clear that he leaned at an early age toward the study of medicine, his choice of career was not yet made. In 1875 he entered the University of California in Berkeley, then an institution of under three hundred students. After studying in the College of Chemistry for two years, he was temporarily blinded during a vacation by the untimely explosion of a large can of blasting powder. This adversity, which put a stop to his studies for nearly two years, filled him with determination rather than

despair. Regaining his eyesight toward the end of 1879, he at once decided upon medicine as a career. In order to lose no more time, he abandoned the idea of completing his university course and forthwith entered the California Medical College in Oakland. In those days, one could become a licensed physician without a university degree and after only two years of medical study. Milburn Logan reduced the time to a year and a half, his previous courses in chemistry giving him a six months' advantage. In 1881 he graduated with honors, married, and opened an office in San Francisco. The science of medicine being what it was in the 1880s, independence of mind, perseverance, flexibility, and imagination were a doctor's greatest assets, and all these Dr. Logan had to a degree. He did not follow the beaten and not particularly rewarding path; rather, he was "an eclectic physician conscientiously selecting or choosing from any or all schools the methods and treatment best adapted to particular cases." Rapidly he built up "a very large and lucrative practice," which within ten years "necessitated the employment of several assistants."⁷

Dr. Logan's energy, zest, and ambition extended far beyond his medical practice. He somehow found time to return to the University of California and graduate in pharmacy. Shortly thereafter, he was elected Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Toxicology in the Medical College and two years later, in 1883, was promoted to the chair of that department. He also became a graduate of the Chautauqua Scientific and Literary Circle, a four-year home-reading course that covered a wide field of history and social culture. Further, he wrote two medical textbooks, studied archaeology, and was an ardent collector of coins, rocks, shells, and petrifications. In addition, he had traveled widely in Europe and the British Isles, "visiting the famous hospitals and seats of learning, especially at Edinburgh, London, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Italy, as well as other parts."⁸

Dr. Logan's only known biography—the short sketch in the Bay Area book—ends with 1892. Of the period between that year and 1900 we can only say that he continued to pursue his

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

studies and to build up his medical practice. By the time we meet him, he was not only an M.D. and a Ph.G. (Graduate in Pharmacy), but an M.A. In the years between 1892 and 1900 he had also built his fine house at 770 Oak Street, where he, his wife, and their two young sons lived, together with one of his sisters and a Dr. Roscoe L. Logan, who may have been a nephew.

It is small wonder that Swamiji liked this man who was so full of life and so interested in a world of subjects, who was able to talk on many topics and apparently able to listen and to learn as well. Above all, Dr. Logan appreciated spiritual idealism; he was not merely an ambitious, energetic, and vigorous-minded man of the world. Although there is nothing explicit in the sketch of his life to indicate a tendency toward spirituality, he may have leaned in that direction from an early age. In 1878, after his accident with the blasting powder, he became, for instance, an active and prominent member of the Knights of Pythias and thereafter joined at least seven other secret societies, such as the Scottish Rite and the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry, all of which had a mystical doctrine at their core. Whether his membership in these societies resulted from or created his interest in metaphysics one cannot say; but it is clear that his interest was genuine and his desire to ally himself with and to serve Śwamiji's work was—as far as can be understood—sincere.

In 1900 Dr. Logan's downtown office suite was the best he could offer the Vedanta Society for a meeting place. According to Mrs. French's memoirs, neither his wife nor his sister shared his enthusiasm for Vedanta. "Both were openly opposed to his renovating and altering of the ground floor plan of his house—used formerly by his two children as playrooms—to meet the needs of the growing society," Mrs. French wrote. "No member of his family ever appeared at any class or other occasion, and in spite of the Doctor's cordial welcome, each of the Swamis in turn felt under restraint while guest in his home, due to this opposition."⁹ (It must have been Dr. Logan's sister

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

who chilled the air during the stays of Swami Turiyananda, Swami Abhedananda, and Swami Trigunatita; for only after Mrs. Logan had died in January of 1901 did Dr. Logan feel free to offer the use of his house to the Vedanta Society. He then lost no time in doing so: from January 31, 1901, to January 22, 1903, the Society made 770 Oak Street its headquarters, and at various times during that period the Swamis—Swami Turiyananda, Swami Abhedananda, and Swami Trigunatita—made it their residence.)

One may wonder why Swamiji stayed for so many days in a household where he was not wholly welcome. The answer lies perhaps in the devotion of Dr. Logan himself and in Swamiji's fondness for him. A document attesting to the warm relation between Swamiji and Dr. Logan is an open letter the doctor wrote to Swami Abhedananda in 1902. The letter has been published in *Vivekananda and His Work* by Swami Abhedananda, and I quote it here, for although it was written at a date beyond our present story, it reflects Dr. Logan's attitude when Swamiji was a guest in his house:

Many are the moments of sadness since the Swamijee has gone away. It seems that all the gods had left us, for his Divine presence spread peace and tranquility wherever he went; the tumult of uncertainty departed from my soul at the sound of his magic voice. His very form and every mood were those of tender compassion and sympathy. None knew him but to love him; those of us who have had the royal good fortune to have met him in the flesh will some day realize that we have met the true Incarnation of the divine One.

To me he is "The Christ," than whom a greater one has never come; his great and liberal soul outshines all other things; his mighty spirit was as free and liberal as the great sun, or the air of heaven.

No being lived so mean or low, be it a man or a beast, that he would not salute. His was not only an appeal to

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

the poor and lowly but to kings and princes and mighty rulers of the earth, to grand masters of learning, of finances, of art and of the sciences, to leaders of thought on all its higher lines. Great teachers bowed reverently at his feet, the humble followed reverently to kiss the hem of his garments; no other single human being was revered more during his life than was Vivekananda.

In the few short weeks that I was with him few could know him better than I. At first I attended him through a severe spell of sickness, then he sat with me partly through a paralytic stroke; he would charm me to sleep and enchant me awake. So passed the sublimest part of my life, and now that sweet memory lingers and sustains me ever and always.¹⁰

On Thursday, May 24, 1900, Swamiji was well enough to attend a regular meeting of the Vedanta Society at Dr. Logan's offices at 6-8-10 Geary Street, a building that stood on the north side of the street near the triangular intersection of Geary, Kearny, and Market. Since April 14, when Swamiji had founded the Society, its members had been meeting there regularly every Thursday evening. At these meetings, which, to judge from their Minutes, had not been particularly eventful, Mr. Charles Neilson, an honorary member of the Class, had read each time from the Gita and had answered questions. The only business of moment that had come before the membership involved the determination of the dues. After a lengthy discussion, during which "many expressed their views on the subject," it had been decided that "there be no limit placed upon the amount of dues to be required from the members or those wishing to join the class."¹¹ Aside from this curious decision, the only event of note had taken place on May 17, when Miss Mizener had resigned as secretary and Mr. Albert S. Wollberg had been chosen for that office, which he was to hold for many years thereafter.

The next meeting of the Vedanta Society—the seventh

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

since its founding—was attended by Swami Vivekananda. The Minutes, which constitute the only known record of this only known occasion when Swamiji addressed a regular meeting of the Society, were as dry and skeletal as when Mr. Neilson gave his usual readings. Nonetheless, they are worth quoting in full:

May 24th 1900 Thursday

The Class met at Dr. Logan's offices, No. 10 Geary St at 8 P.M.

The Swami Vivekananda delivered an address on the Bhagavad Gita.

Thereupon a business meeting ensued at which Dr. Plumb notified the Class that the Swami would deliver a course of three lectures at Dr. Logan's residence, 770 Oak Street.

The evenings determined on, after taking a vote, were Saturday, Monday and Tuesday, the lecture to be held at 8 P.M.

Tickets for the series to be \$1 for the three and 50c for each separate lecture.

The meeting then adjourned.¹²

"I did not go home [from Camp Taylor] until June 16th," Ida Ansell was to write to Mr. Allan in 1932, "so missed [Swamiji's] Gita talks, which I think were given at Dr. Logan's."¹³ Happily, she was much mistaken: she had not only attended the Gita talks (very likely all the campers had returned to San Francisco for the purpose), but had taken excellent notes, which she later discovered and which today constitute our only records of Swamiji's farewell talks in California.

Miss Ansell's notes of these three talks on the Gita, the second transcripts of which have been published in volume one of the *Complete Works*, are particularly valuable, for while there are many references to the Gita scattered through the *Complete Works*, one finds few talks devoted exclusively to this subject.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Swamiji no doubt held a number of Gita classes at the Math in India, both before going to the West the second time and after his return, but the only published record of such classes is of one held in 1897 when the Math was still located at Alambazar, near Calcutta. A summary of this class was entered into the Math Diary and subsequently translated for publication in the *Complete Works* (volume four) under the title "Thoughts on the Gita." In addition to this, one finds in volume five of the *Complete Works* the translated notes of a talk on the Gita entitled "Work without Motive," delivered by Swamiji in Calcutta before a meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission on March 20, 1898. If we add a portion of his lecture "The Sages of India," delivered in Madras in 1897, to his published Indian discourses on the Gita, then we find that the *Complete Works* contain three such discourses, which, considering Swamiji's lifelong regard for this book, is not a great many. Of his talks on the Gita in the West, Ida Ansell's transcripts are the only records we possess.

As is well known, one of the great contributions Swamiji made to the religious culture of the world was to give the pure truths of the Upanishads to the people in a form that could be understood by everyone. "If you look," he once said to Sister Nivedita, "you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea *strength*. The quintessence of Vedas and Vedanta and all lies in that one word."¹⁴ But Swamiji did not thereby slight the Gita; indeed he looked upon the Gita as the best possible commentary on the Upanishads. The book was with him always, not only in the sense that he carried it with him everywhere, but in the less literal sense that its verses seem to have been ever on the tip of his tongue, ready to highlight some teaching or observation of his own.

As a prelude to Swamiji's classes at Dr. Logan's, it may be worthwhile to discuss here his other discourses, as well as his scattered comments, on the Gita, or at least to mention the primary points he made in regard to this great book which he

held in such high esteem. I am aware, however, that such a discussion may not be of interest to every reader, and thus it is only fair to say at once that the following section can be skipped without doing violence to the story of Swamiji's life in California.

6

In discussing Swamiji's talks and comments on the Gita, it will be best, I believe, to use his class at the Alambazar Math as a sort of framework. This class, to judge from its summary in the *Complete Works*, seems to have been Swamiji's first Gita class at the Monastery. He gave it for the benefit of his young disciples, and he began by raising a number of scholarly questions.

"To understand the Gita properly," he is quoted in the Math Diary as having said, "several things are very important to know. First, whether it formed a part of the Mahabharata, i.e., whether the authorship attributed to Veda-Vyasa was true, or if it was merely interpolated within the great epic; secondly, whether there was any historical personality of the name of Krishna; thirdly, whether the great war of Kurukshetra as mentioned in the Gita actually took place; and fourthly, whether Arjuna and others were real historical persons."¹ Swamiji went on to explain that there were valid grounds for asking such questions and for subjecting the historicity of the Gita to the researches and probings of higher criticism. We need not discuss those grounds for inquiry here, but need only give Swamiji's conclusions as found both in his Math class and elsewhere.

As for the date of the Gita, he was definite in not placing it later than that of the *Mahabharata*. "Many are of opinion," he said in his talk before the Ramakrishna Mission, "that the Gita was not written at the time of the Mahabharata. This is not correct. The special teachings of the Gita are to be found in every part of the Mahabharata."² In a somewhat more

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

scholarly talk given in the late summer of 1900 before the Paris Congress of Religions, Swamiji again discussed the date of the Gita. "[He] said that the worship of Sri Krishna is much older than that of Buddha," the report of his talk reads, "and if the Gita be not of the same date as the Mahabharata, it is surely much earlier, and by no means later. The style of language of the Gita is the same as that of the Mahabharata. . . . Again, the line of thought in the Gita is the same as in the Mahabharata; and when the Gita notices the doctrines of all the religious sects of the time, why does it not ever mention the name of Buddhism?"³

It is quite probable, Swamiji said at Alambazar Math in connection with the historical position of the Gita, that it was the scripture of a sect that later ceased to exist but that "had embodied its high and noble ideas in this sacred book."⁴ Again, during the course of his talk before the Ramakrishna Mission, he expressed the view that the Gita represented the solution to, or synthesis of, two clashing views of religion. "When the Gita was first preached," he said, "there was then going on a great controversy between two sects. One party considered the Vedic Yajnas and animal sacrifices and such Karmas [rituals] to constitute the whole of religion. The other preached that the killing of numberless horses and cattle cannot be called religion. The people belonging to the latter party were mostly Sannyasins and followers of Jnana. They believed that the giving up of all work and the gaining of the knowledge of the Self was the only path to Moksha. By the preaching of His great doctrine of work without motive, the Author of the Gita set at rest the dispute of these two antagonistic sects."⁵

In his "Reply to the Maharaja of Khetri," written in the spring of 1895, Swamiji gave a more political interpretation of the struggle between the two clashing sects. "Ancient India," he wrote, "had for centuries been the battlefield for the ambitious projects of two of her foremost classes—the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. .

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

“On the one hand, the priesthood stood between the lawless social tyranny of the princes over the masses, whom the Kshatriyas declared to be their legal food. On the other hand, the Kshatriya power was the one potent force which struggled with any success against the spiritual tyranny of the priesthood and the ever-increasing chain of ceremonials, which they were forging to bind down the people with.

“The tug of war began in the earliest periods of the history of our race, and throughout the Shrutis it can be distinctly traced. A momentary lull came when Sri Krishna, leading the faction of Kshatriya power and of Jnana, showed the way to reconciliation. The result was the teachings of the Gita—the essence of philosophy, of liberality, of religion. . . .”⁶

As for the historicity of Sri Krishna, Swamiji looked upon much of the mythology that centered around him as simply that—mythology. “It is human nature to build round the real character of a great man all sorts of imaginary superhuman attributes,” he said at Alambazar Math. “As regards Krishna the same must have happened, but it seems quite probable that he was a king. Quite probable I say, because it was chiefly the kings who exerted themselves most in the preaching of Brahma-Jnana.”⁷

It is interesting to note that in his lecture “The Sages of India” Swamiji declared that there must indeed have lived a supremely great soul known by the name of Krishna—not alone because of the teachings of the Gita, but also because of that “great landmark in the history of religions”—the teaching of Divine Love contained in the *Bhagavatam*, the story of the Cowherd of Vrindavan. “Taking the life of any other sage or prophet,” Swamiji said, “we find that that prophet is only the evolution of what had gone before him, we find that that prophet is only preaching the ideas that had been scattered about his own country even in his own times. Great doubts may exist even as to whether that prophet existed or not. But here, I challenge any one to show whether these things, these ideals—work for work’s sake, love for love’s sake, duty for duty’s

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

sake, were not original ideas with Krishna, and as such, there must have been someone with whom these ideas originated. They could not have been borrowed from anybody else. They were not floating about in the atmosphere when Krishna was born. But the Lord Krishna was the first preacher of this; his disciple Vyasa took it up and preached it unto mankind.”⁸

In regard to the Kurukshetra War, Swamiji stated at Alambazar Math that there was no doubt that a war was fought between the Kurus and the Panchalas [Pandavas]. But did Sri Krishna actually deliver the whole of the Gita when the two great armies were facing each other, poised to fight? And if this improbable event did indeed take place, “was any shorthand writer present there to note down every word spoken between Krishna and Arjuna in the din and turmoil of the battlefield?” There was room here for doubt. “According to some,” Swamiji said, “this Kurukshetra War is only an allegory. When we sum up its esoteric significance, it means the war which is constantly going on within man between the tendencies of good and evil.”⁹

On other occasions, also, Swamiji mentioned that the Gita could be taken as allegorical. Having come to class one morning at Thousand Island Park with a Gita in his hand, he thus interpreted the first discourse: “Krishna, the ‘Lord of souls,’ talks to Arjuna, or Gudakesha, ‘Lord of sleep’ (he who has conquered sleep). The ‘field of virtue’ (the battle-field) is this world; the five brothers (representing righteousness) fight the hundred other brothers (all that we love and have to contend against); the most heroic brother, Arjuna (the awakened soul), is the general. We have to fight all sense-delights, the things to which we are most attached, to kill them. We have to stand alone; we are Brahman, all other ideas must be merged in this one.”¹⁰

Yet Swamiji did not labor this allegorical interpretation of the Gita. To him the setting of the Kurukshetra War was more *representative* than allegorical. The battle Arjuna must fight represents the intense external activity that life demands from

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

the average man. That each must perform the action allotted to him without flinching, with full vigor, and, above all, with perfect inner serenity was, to Swamiji's mind, the Gita's essential message, and no place could have been more appropriate than the battlefield for the deliverance of such a teaching. Historical or not, the setting served to heighten the central theme and was, in this respect, a consummate stroke of art. Indeed, when through Swamiji's eyes one sees the divine scene taking place, the setting becomes a teaching in itself.

In a conversation in Calcutta with a Hindu gentleman, Swamiji described his own conception of that immortal event, himself posing as the divine charioteer teaching the path of *dharma* to Arjuna. "The central idea of the Gita should radiate from His whole form," he said. "... Look here, thus does he hold the bridle of the horses—so tight that they are brought to their haunches, with their forelegs fighting the air and their mouths gaping. This will show a tremendous play of action in the figure of Sri Krishna. His friend, the world-renowned hero, casting aside his bow and arrows, has sunk down like a coward on the chariot, in the midst of the two armies. And Sri Krishna, whip in one hand and tightening the reins with the other, has turned himself towards Arjuna, with his childlike face beaming with unworldly love and sympathy, and a calm and serene look—and is delivering the message of the Gita to his beloved comrade. Now, tell me," Swamiji asked his friend, "what idea this picture of the Preacher of the Gita conveys, to you?"

"Activity combined with firmness and serenity," the friend replied.

"Aye," Swamiji exclaimed, "that's it!—Intense action in the whole body, and withal a face expressing the profound calmness and serenity of the blue sky! This is the central idea of the Gita—to be calm and steadfast in all circumstances, with one's body, mind, and soul centered at His hallowed Feet!"¹¹

What need that this scene be historical? As for Arjuna and other heroes of the *Mahabharata*, Swamiji pointed out at Alambazar Math the scholarly grounds for doubting that

such persons had actually lived. Thus, step by step and with his characteristic regard for truth, he blasted some irreparable holes in the historical foundations of the Gita. But having done so, he at once reminded his young disciples that "there is no connection between these historical researches and our real aim [of study], which is the knowledge that leads to the acquirement of Dharma. . . . Even if the historicity of the whole thing is proved to be absolutely false today, it will not in the least be any loss to us."

"Now," Swamiji continued at the Math, "it is for us to see what there is in the Gita." Here, with the help of one of those beautiful, clarifying analogies that seem to have been always at his service, he evaluated the Gita in relation to the Upanishads. "If we study the Upanishads," he said, "we notice, in wandering through the mazes of many irrelevant subjects, the sudden introduction of the discussion of a great truth, just as in the midst of a huge wilderness a traveller unexpectedly comes across here and there an exquisitely beautiful rose, with its leaves, thorns, roots, all entangled. [In the Gita, on the other hand, one finds] these truths beautifully arranged. . . in their proper places—like a fine garland or a bouquet of the choicest flowers."¹²

In London in 1896 Swamiji had expressed somewhat the same idea when he compared the Gita to the older Upanishads. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, for instance, "one has to wade sometimes through quite a mass of unnecessary things to get at the essential doctrines"; whereas in the Gita, which he said could be looked upon as the last of the Upanishads, one finds "the beautiful flowers of spiritual truths"¹³ collected and brought into one place. For this very reason, however, one cannot study in the Gita, as one can in the very old Upanishads, the development of spiritual ideas, nor can one trace those ideas to their source.

But while the Gita may not serve as an archive of India's millennia of spiritual thought, it has served as the greatest commentary on that thought. Again and again throughout the

Complete Works one finds Swamiji praising the Gita as "the best authority on Vedanta," "the best commentary we have on the Vedanta philosophy," or again, the best "commentary on the Vedas [that] has been written or can be written." He also spoke of the Gita as "the divine commentary of the Vedanta," meaning that it was literally of divine origin. And in Madras in 1897 he said unequivocally, "The only commentary, the authoritative commentary on the Vedas, has been made once and for all by Him who inspired the Vedas—by Krishna in the Gita."¹⁴

Swamiji recommended the study of the Gita to all: householder or monk, Indian or Westerner. "Please read the Gita every day to the best of your opportunity,"¹⁵ he wrote in May of 1893 to Srimati Indumati Mitra, who, together with her husband, Haripada Mitra, had become his disciple in Belgaum in what was then the province of Bombay. We know that at Thousand Island Park he taught from the Gita, surely advising his students to read it. And again, in Pasadena during the course of his lecture on the *Mahabharata*, he advised those in his audience who had not already read the Gita to do so. "If you only knew how much it has influenced your own country even!" he exclaimed. "If you want to know the source of Emerson's inspiration, it is this book, the Gita. He went to see Carlyle, and Carlyle made him a present of the Gita: and that little book is responsible for the Concord movement. All the broad movements in America, in one way or other, are indebted to the Concord party."¹⁶ Swamiji must also have advised his San Francisco audiences to study the Gita, and perhaps it was because of his specific instructions that the newborn Vedanta Society read and discussed this work at its weekly meetings.

At the Math Swamiji insisted upon the study of the scriptures, among them the Gita. "Sir," his disciple Chakravarty once said (in November of 1898), "talking with you and listening to your realisations, I feel no necessity for the study of scriptures." "No!" Swamiji exploded. "Scriptures have to be studied also. For the attainment of Jnana, study of scriptures

is essential. I shall soon open classes in the Math for them. The Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita and Bhagavata should be studied in the classes, and I shall teach the Panini Ashtadhyayi [Sanskrit grammar].”¹⁷

“Now,” said Swamiji at Alambazar, having discussed the historicity of the Gita and its place among Hindu scriptures, “let us see some of the main points discussed in the Gita. Wherein lies the originality of the Gita which distinguishes it from all preceding scriptures? It is this: Though before its advent, Yoga, Jnana, Bhakti, etc. had each its strong adherents, they all quarrelled among themselves, each claiming superiority for his own chosen path; no one ever tried to seek for reconciliation among these different paths. It was the author of the Gita who for the first time tried to harmonise these. He took the best from what all the sects then existing had to offer and threaded them in the Gita.”¹⁸

Swamiji elaborated elsewhere upon the universality of the Gita, in which were reconciled the various clashing sects, all of which purported to be based upon the Upanishads. “The essence of the Srutis, or of the Upanishads, is hard to be understood, seeing that there are so many commentators, each one trying to interpret in his own way,” he said in “The Sages of India.” “Then the Lord Himself comes, He who is the inspirer of the Srutis, to show us the meaning of them, as the preacher of the Gita, and today India wants nothing better, the world wants nothing better than that method of interpretation.”

In this particular passage, Swamiji went on to say that the modern commentator twists and tortures Upanishadic texts “to bring them all to a meaning of his own”—be it monistic, qualified monistic, or dualistic. “But you find in the Gita, there is no attempt at torturing any one of them. They are all right, says the Lord: for slowly and gradually the human soul rises up and up, step after step, from the gross to the fine, from the fine to the finer, until it reaches the Absolute, the goal. That is what is in the Gita. Even the Karma Kanda [the ritualistic portion of the Vedas] is taken up, and it is shown that although

it cannot give salvation direct, but only indirectly, yet that is also valid; images are valid indirectly; ceremonies, forms, everything is valid—only with one condition, purity of the heart....”¹⁹

Nor did Sri Krishna bar the lower castes from a path to liberation. “In the Gita,” Swamiji wrote in 1894 to his orthodox Madras disciple “Kidi,” “the way is laid open to all men and women, to all caste and colour, but Vyasa tries to put meanings upon the Vedas to cheat the poor Shudras. Is God a nervous fool like you,” he continued, “that the flow of His river of mercy would be dammed up by a piece of meat? If such be He, His value is not a pie!”²⁰

In his catholicity and in his manysidedness Sri Krishna, in Swamiji’s opinion, stood greater than all other Incarnations of the past. “As a character Buddha was the greatest the world has ever seen; next to him Christ,” he said at Thousand Island Park. “But the teachings of Krishna as taught by the Gita are the grandest the world has ever known. He who wrote that wonderful poem was one of those rare souls whose lives send a wave of regeneration through the world. The human race will never again see such a brain as his who wrote the Gita.”²¹ It is not strange, he said in “The Sages of India,” that Sri Krishna was called in the *Bhagavatam* not only an Incarnation of the Lord, but the Lord Himself. “He was the most wonderful Sannyasin, and the most wonderful householder in one; he had the most wonderful amount of Rajas, power, and was at the same time living in the midst of the most wonderful renunciation.... Krishna, the preacher of the Gita, was all his life the embodiment of that Song Celestial.”²²

True, Lord Buddha, in his vastness of heart, also opened the doors of religion to all—and this with even greater effect. “As disciple of himself, as it were, the same Krishna came to show how to make his theories practical,” Swamiji said in the same Madras lecture. “There comes once again the same voice that in the Gita preached, ‘Even the least bit done of this religion saves from great fear.’ ‘Women, or Vaishyas, or even Shudras,

all reach the highest goal'.... As it were to give a living example of this preaching, as it were to make at least one part of it practical, the preacher himself came in another form, and this was Shakyamuni [Buddha], the preacher to the poor and the miserable, he who rejected even the language of the gods to speak in the language of the people, so that he might reach the hearts of the people; he who gave up a throne to live with beggars, and the poor, and the downcast, he who pressed the Pariah to his breast like a second Rama."²³

Yet, as Swamiji often pointed out, Buddha's work had one great defect for which India was still suffering. "Buddha made the fatal mistake," he once said, "of thinking that the whole world could be lifted to the height of the Upanishads. And self-interest spoiled all. Krishna was wiser, because He was more politic."²⁴ "The good for him who desires Moksha [Liberation] is one," he wrote in "The East and the West," "and the good for him who wants Dharma [here the word *dharma* is used to mean that which makes man seek for happiness in this world or the next] is another. This is the great truth which the Lord Sri Krishna, the revealer of the Gita, has tried therein to explain."²⁵ "The Buddhist command ['Realise all this as illusion']," he said at another time, "could only be carried out through monasticism; the Hindu ['Realise that within the illusion is the Real'] might be fulfilled through any state of life."²⁶

"Why this attempt to compel the whole world to follow the same path to Moksha [Liberation]?" he wrote in regard to Buddhism in "The East and the West." "'Can beauty be manufactured by rubbing and scrubbing? Can anybody's love be won by threat or force?' What does Buddha or Christ prescribe for the man who neither wants Moksha nor is fit to receive it? Nothing! Either you must have Moksha or you are doomed to destruction—these are the only two ways held forth by them, and there is no middle course. You are tied hand and foot in the matter of trying for anything other than Moksha. There is no way shown how you may enjoy the world a little

for a time; not only all openings to that are hermetically sealed to you, but, in addition, there are obstructions put at every step.... Buddha ruined us, and so did Christ ruin Greece and Rome!"²⁷

(One here anticipates a class Swamiji was to give on the Gita in New York in the summer of 1900, which was attended by Sister Nivedita. "There was an implication throughout the talk," she wrote, "that Christ and Buddha were inferior to Krishna—in the grasp of problems—inasmuch as they preached the highest ethics as a world-path, whereas Krishna saw the right of the *whole*, in all its parts—to its own differing ideals. But perhaps no one not familiar with his thought would have realized that this lay behind his exclamation, '*The Sermon on the Mount* has only become another bondage for the soul of man!' ")²⁸

Yet the Western world was not so greatly hampered by the teaching of a path too idealistic and otherworldly for the generality of people as was India, for as Swamiji pointed out in "The East and the West," "the Europeans never took the words of Jesus Christ seriously." "Always of active habits," he wrote, "being possessed of a tremendous Rajasika nature, they are gathering with great enterprise and youthful ardour the comforts and luxuries of the different countries of the world, and enjoying them to their hearts' content." Conversely, the Hindus, to their long misery, had never taken the words of Sri Krishna seriously: "We are sitting in a corner, with our bag and baggage, pondering on death day and night, and singing, 'Very tremulous and unsteady is the water on the lotus-leaf; so is the life of man frail and transient.' . . . Who are following the teachings of the Gita?—the Europeans! And who are acting according to the will of Jesus Christ?—the descendants of Sri Krishna!"²⁹

Even as India had not taken seriously the path of karma yoga as taught by Sri Krishna, neither had she grasped his attempted reconciliation of the various sects. Hindu commentators tortured the texts of the Gita, even as they did those

of the Upanishads, cramming them into the philosophical pigeonholes of their choice. The task of reconciliation remained for Sri Ramakrishna and for Swamiji himself.

"Where Sri Krishna failed to show a complete reconciliation (Samanvaya) among these warring sects," Swamiji said at the Alambazar Math, "it was fully accomplished by Ramakrishna Paramahansa in this nineteenth century."³⁰ "The time was ripe," he declared in "The Sages of India," "for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was born," Swamiji continued, "and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years."³¹

It was for Swamiji not only to spread Sri Ramakrishna's message of harmony to the world at large but to give it philosophical form. "Hitherto," Sister Nivedita pointed out in her book *The Master as I Saw Him*, "the three philosophic systems . . . had been regarded as offering to the soul three different ideals of liberation. No attempt had ever before been made to reconcile these schools. On reaching Madras, however, in 1897, Vivekananda boldly claimed that even the utmost realisations of Dualism and Modified Unism [Qualified Monism], were but stages on the way to Unism [Monism] itself; and the final bliss, for all alike, was the mergence in One without a second. It is said," Sister Nivedita continued, "that at one of his midday question-classes [at Madras], a member of his audience asked him why, if this was the truth, it had never before been mentioned by any of the Masters. . . . The great gathering was

startled, on this occasion, to hear the reply [given in both English and Sanskrit]:—'Because I was born for this, and it was left for me to do!' ”³²

Again, in Calcutta Swamiji said during the course of his lecture “The Vedanta in All Its Phases”: “The time requires that a better interpretation should be given to this underlying harmony of the Upanishadic texts, whether they are dualistic, or non-dualistic, quasi-dualistic, or so forth. That has to be shown before the world at large; and this work is required as much in India as outside of India; and I, through the grace of God, had the great good fortune to sit at the feet of one whose whole life was such an interpretation, whose life, a thousand-fold more than whose teaching, was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was in fact the spirit of the Upanishads living in a human form. Perhaps I have got a little of that harmony; I do not know whether I shall be able to express it or not. But this is my attempt, my mission in life, to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping-stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi, is reached.”³³

It was for Swamiji, also, to revive and restate Sri Krishna's teaching of karma yoga, the path of action in which work was combined with and illumined by Advaita Vedanta. In a passage that has become famous, he spoke in one breath of the Upanishads, Sri Krishna's teaching, and his own message. “Let me tell you,” he cried to the people of Madras in 1897, “strength, strength is what we want. And the first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads and believe—I am the Soul.”...

“...But the Upanishads,” he continued, “were in the hands of the Sannyasin; he went into the forest!... [In the Gita these ideas are there] for everyone in every occupation of life. These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the Bar and the Bench, in the Pulpit, and in the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman and child whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be.... Even the least thing well done brings marvellous results; therefore let every one do what little he can. If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student. If the lawyer thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer....”³⁴

Thus, without asking anyone to renounce his hereditary or chosen way of life, Swamiji preached Advaita Vedanta to all. He did ask, however, that everyone make his everyday activity a ladder to the highest goal.

How? What was the way for the fisherman, say, to avoid entangling himself in his own net of action? “My son,” Swamiji once said to his disciple Chakravarty, “such are the intricacies of work, that even great saints are caught in them and become attached. Therefore work has to be done without any desire for results. This is the teaching of the Gita.”³⁵

While the reconciliation of various paths and philosophies was the first special characteristic of the Gita that Swamiji discussed during the course of his class at the Alambazar Math, work without desire or attachment was the second. Nonattachment was also, of course, the primary subject of his discourse “Work without Motive” before the Ramakrishna Mission.

He found it necessary to uproot many false conceptions of the doctrine of nonattachment. “People nowadays understand what is meant by [Nishkama Karma, or work without desire or attachment] in various ways,” he said at the Alambazar Math. “Some say what is implied by being unattached is to become purposeless. If that were its real meaning, then heartless brutes and the walls would be the best exponents of the performance of Nishkama Karma....No! The true Nishkama Karmi is neither to be like a brute, nor to be inert, nor heartless. He is not Tamasika but of pure Sattva. His heart is so full of

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

love and sympathy that he can embrace the whole world with his love.”³⁶

Again, at the meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swamiji said, “Many understand [work without motive] in the sense that one is to work in such a way that neither pleasure nor pain touches his mind. If this be its real meaning, then the animals might be said to work without motive. Some animals devour their own offspring, and they do not feel any pangs at all in doing so. . . .

“[The] Gita teaches Karma-Yoga,” Swamiji continued. “We should work through Yoga (concentration). In such concentration in action, there is no consciousness of the lower ego present. . . . The Western people do not understand this. They say that if there be no consciousness of ego, if this ego is gone, how then can a man work? But when one works with concentration, losing all consciousness of oneself, the work that is done will be infinitely better; and this everyone may have experienced in his own life. [The artist, for instance, loses himself in his art.] . . . The Gita teaches that all works should be done thus. . . . Those who work without any consciousness of their lower ego are not affected with evil, for they work for the good of the world. To work without motive, to work unattached, brings the highest bliss and freedom. This secret of Karma-Yoga is taught by the Lord Shri Krishna in the Gita.”³⁷

Work without motive was anything but work in cold blood. It is interesting in this connection to notice again (as we noticed in the chapter on Los Angeles) that during this second visit to the West Swamiji laid less stress on nonattachment, a word open to misinterpretation, than on the power of attachment combined with the power of detachment. Writing of the period following his return to India in 1897, Sister Nivedita commented in *The Master As I Saw Him* that Swamiji had once “told some of us that he had now realised that the power to attach oneself was quite as important as that of detachment.”³⁸ One cannot, of course, suppose from this that the realization

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

had not been complete with Swamiji years before, but only that, for one reason or another, it had come to the forefront of his mind. The ability to love, to feel deeply and intensely, was always, in his view, one of the criteria of manliness and of successful service. Nor did devotion to the individual stand in contradiction to his teaching of monism. "You must be able to sympathise fully with each particular," he had said at Thousand Island Park, "then at once to jump back to the highest monism. After having perfected yourself, you limit yourself voluntarily. Take the whole power into each action. Be able to become a dualist for the time being and forget Advaita, yet be able to take it up again at will."³⁹

We do not find, however, that Swamiji stressed the perfect balance between attachment and detachment as pointedly during his first visit to the West—in his classes on Karma Yoga, for instance—as he did during his second visit. There had been in the interim, perhaps, something to heighten in his mind the importance of this particular teaching to the modern world. Thus we found him in Los Angeles emphasizing the necessity for total involvement in service combined with complete serenity. "That soul has not been awakened that never feels weakness, never feels misery," he said in his Los Angeles lecture "Work and Its Secret." "That is a callous state. We do not want that. At the same time, we not only want this mighty power of love, this mighty power of attachment, the power of throwing our whole soul upon a single object, losing ourselves and letting ourselves be annihilated, as it were, for other souls—which is the power of the gods—but we want to be higher even than the gods. The perfect man can put his whole soul upon that one point of love, yet he is unattached."⁴⁰ In a small way—according to his capacity—each man must be like the World Teacher himself: he must be both intensely human and immovably divine.

In San Francisco Swamiji again pointed to the need for attachment as well as for detachment and stressed the element of power necessary to both. "It is the power of concentration

and attachment as well as the power of detachment that we must develop," he said in his lecture on "Breathing." "If the man is equally powerful in both—that man has attained manhood."⁴¹ And in a letter from San Francisco, dated March 28, he wrote, "Both attachment and detachment perfectly developed make a man great and happy."⁴²

Swamiji's emphasis on attachment, in the sense of dedication, is implicit in his interpretation of the Gita as a call to active, forthright resistance of evil. He saw nothing in the sacred scriptures of his Motherland to sanction passive resistance as a way of life for the householder or as a policy of action for a nation. Both before and since Swamiji's time interpreters of the Gita, including Mahatma Gandhi, have explained away Sri Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna as being in the nature of an allegory. While Swamiji did not, as we have seen, repudiate the allegorical interpretation, he did not thereby discard the literal interpretation, for therein he saw a message of greater import. During his class talk at the Alambazar Math, he read the first three verses from the second chapter of the Gita and devoted the remainder of his talk to the third of these verses: "Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha! Ill doth it become thee. Cast off this mean faint-heartedness and arise, O scorcher of thine enemies!"⁴³

Why, Swamiji asked, is Sri Krishna goading Arjuna to fight? Because, he replied, Arjuna's disinclination to fight did not arise out of the overwhelming predominance of pure sattva guna, but out of tamas. "It was all Tamas that brought on this unwillingness. . . . Arjuna was afraid, he was overwhelmed with pity. That he had the instinct and inclination to fight is proved by the simple fact that he came to the battlefield with no other purpose than that. Frequently in our lives also such things are seen to happen. Many people think they are Sattvika by nature, but they are really nothing but Tamasika. . . . The Tamoguna loves very much to array itself in the garb of the Sattva. Here, in Arjuna, the mighty warrior, it has come under the guise of Daya (pity)."⁴⁴

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

In his Motherland, Swamiji spoke again and again of the predominance of *tamas* (or inertia) that had settled over the country like a miasmal fog. He often spoke tauntingly to his countrymen, even as Sri Krishna had spoken to Arjuna, in order to stir up a blaze of activity in a basically heroic heart. "Mark you," he wrote in "The East and the West," "those things which you see in pusillanimous, effeminate folk who speak in a nasal tone chewing every syllable, whose voice is as thin as of one who has been starving for a week, who are like a tattered wet rag, who never protest or are moved even if kicked by anybody—those are the signs of the lowest *Tamas*, those are the signs of death, not of *Sattva*—all corruption and stench. It is because Arjuna was going to fall into the ranks of these men that the Lord is explaining matters to him so elaborately in the Gita. . . . Coming under the influence of the Jains, Buddhists, and others, we have joined the lines of those *Tamasika* people. During these last thousand years, the whole country is filling the air with the name of the Lord and is sending its prayers to Him; and the Lord is never lending His ears to them. And why should He? When even man never hears the cries of the fool, do you think God will? Now the only way out is to listen to the words of the Lord in the Gita, 'Yield not to unmanliness, O Partha! . . . ' "45

There was a lesson here for Westerners, who were prone to mouth the highest of ideals, as well as for Indians. "In reading the Bhagavad Gita," Swamiji said in 1896 in a New York class on karma yoga, "many of you in Western countries may have felt astonished at the second chapter, wherein Sri Krishna calls Arjuna a hypocrite and a coward because of his refusal to fight or offer resistance on account of his adversaries being his friends and relatives, making the plea that non-resistance was the highest ideal of love. This is a great lesson for us all to learn, that in all matters the two extremes are alike. The extreme positive and the extreme negative are always similar. When the vibrations of light are too slow, we do not see them, nor do we see them when they are too rapid. So with sound, when very

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

low in pitch, we do not hear it; when very high, we do not hear it either. Of like nature is the difference between resistance and non-resistance. One man does not resist because he is weak, lazy, and cannot, not because he will not; the other man knows that he can strike an irresistible blow if he likes; yet he not only does not strike, but blesses his enemies. The one who from weakness resists not commits a sin, and as such cannot receive any benefit from the non-resistance; while the other would commit a sin by offering resistance. . . . So we must always be careful about what we really mean when we speak of this non-resistance and ideal love. . . .

"The Karma Yogi," Swamiji continued, "is the man who understands that the highest ideal is non-resistance, and who also knows that this non-resistance is the highest manifestation of power in actual possession, and also what is called the resisting of evil is but a step on the way towards the manifestation of this highest power, namely non-resistance. Before reaching this highest ideal, man's duty is to resist evil; let him work, let him fight, let him strike straight from the shoulder. Then only, when he has gained the power to resist, will non-resistance be a virtue."⁴⁶

(In a Gita class in New York, only a few words of which have come down to us through a letter of Sister Nivedita's, Swamiji was to speak in 1900 even more strongly and more graphically on the difference between resistance and non-resistance. "Non-resistance," he said, "is *not* for the man who thinks the replacing of the maggot in the wound by the leprous saint with, 'Eat, Brother!' disgusting and horrible. Non-resistance is practised by a mother's love towards an angry child. It is a travesty in the mouth of a coward or in the face of a lion.")⁴⁷

But whence does one derive the strength, first, to detect, and second, to overcome the cowardice that is disguised as love and rationalized as the highest idealism? In Sri Krishna's answer to this, Swamiji found the chief glory of the Gita. "In order to remove this delusion which had overtaken Arjuna, what did the Bhagavan say?" he asked at the Alambazar Math, and

continued with his own as well as Sri Krishna's answer: "As I always preach that you should not decry a man by calling him a sinner but that you should draw his attention to the omnipotent power that is in him, in the same way does the Bhagavan speak to Arjuna. 'It doth not befit thee!' 'Thou art Atman imperishable, beyond all evil. Having forgotten thy real nature, thou hast, by thinking thyself a sinner, as one afflicted with bodily evils and mental grief, thou hast made thyself so—this doth not befit thee!'—so says the Bhagavan: 'Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha.' "

"If you, my sons, can proclaim this message to the world," Swamiji said to the young monks gathered around him at the Math, "then all this disease, grief, sin, and sorrow will vanish from off the face of the earth in three days. All these ideas of weakness will be nowhere. Now it is everywhere—this current of the vibration of fear. Reverse the current; bring in the opposite vibration, and behold the magic transformation! . . . Proclaim to the whole world with trumpet voice, 'There is no sin in thee, there is no misery in thee; thou art the reservoir of omnipotent power. Arise, awake, and manifest the Divinity within!' "48

In the call to the invincible glory of the Atman lay, to Swamiji's mind, the essential teaching of the Gita. "If one reads this one Shloka—'Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha' etc. one gets all the merits of reading the entire Gita," he said at the conclusion of his class at the Math; "for in this one Shloka lies imbedded the whole Message of the Gita."⁴⁹ Fundamentally, it was a teaching of jnana yoga. Although Swamiji found bhakti, or devotion, highly developed in the Gita (as it was not in the Upanishads), he did not consider, as have some commentators, that Sri Krishna stressed this path. "Shri Krishna spoke the Gita, establishing Himself in the Atman," he said to his disciple Chakravarty. "Those passages of the Gita where references to the word 'I' occur, invariably indicate the Atman: 'Take refuge in Me alone' means, 'Be established in the Atman.' This knowledge of the Atman is the

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

highest aim of the Gita. The references to Yoga, etc. are but incidental to this realisation of the Atman. Those who have not this knowledge of the Atman are 'suicides.' 'They kill themselves by the clinging to the unreal'; they lose their life in the noose of sense-pleasures.... The human soul, represented by Arjuna, was touched with fear. Therefore Bhagavan Shri Krishna, established in the Atman, spoke to him the teachings of the Gita. Still his fear would not leave him. Later, when Arjuna saw the Universal Form of the Lord, and became established in the Atman, then with all bondages of Karma burnt by the fire of knowledge, he fought the battle."⁵⁰

On other occasions also, Swamiji declared that the essential teaching of the Gita was Advaita Vedanta. "Jnana is taught very clearly by Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita," he said in 1895 or 1896 during a discourse in New York. "... Through chapter after chapter, Krishna teaches the higher truths of philosophy and religion to Arjuna. It is these teachings which make this poem so wonderful; practically the whole of the Vedanta philosophy is included in them. The Vedas teach that the soul is infinite and in no way affected by the death of the body."⁵¹ Again, during a lecture in south India he cried to his countrymen, "Teach yourselves, teach every one his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes.... Ay, if there is anything in the Gita that I like, it is these two verses, coming out strong as the very gist, the very essence, of Krishna's teaching—'He who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the Imperishable in things that perish, he sees indeed. For seeing the Lord as the same, everywhere present, he does not destroy the Self by the self, and thus he goes to the highest goal.'"⁵²

It was always the Sri Krishna "roaring the Gita out with the voice of a lion" that Swamiji taught to the modern world, never the flute-playing Sri Krishna of Vrindavan. Not that he found the Krishna of the Gita greater than the Krishna of the *Bhagavatam*. On the contrary, the madness of the love of the Gopis is "the very essence of the Krishna Incarnation," he said

in "The Sages of India." "Even the Gita, the great philosophy itself, does not compare with that madness, for in the Gita the disciple is taught slowly how to walk towards the goal, but here is the madness of enjoyment, the drunkenness of love, where disciples and teachers and teachings and books and all these things have become one; even the ideas of fear, and God, and heaven—everything has been thrown away. What remains is the madness of love. . . . That was the great Krishna!"⁵³

But this divine madness was not for the generality of people; nor was it for the modern age in which each man is to work for all and none is to be left behind in darkness. "Only contemplating the Krishna of Vrindaban with His flute won't do nowadays," Swamiji said to Chakravarty in 1897, "—that will not bring salvation to men. Now is needed the worship of Shri Krishna uttering forth the lion-roar of the Gita, of Rama with His bow and arrows, of Mahavira, of Mother Kali. Then only will the people grow strong by going to work with great energy and will."⁵⁴

Even as the path of Divine Love was not for the modern man, neither was the path of jnana yoga as it was generally taught. "The tidal wave of Western civilization is now rushing over the length and breadth of the country," Swamiji said at another time to Chakravarty. "It won't do now simply to sit in meditation on mountain tops without realising in the least its usefulness. Now is wanted—as said in the Gita by the Lord—intense Karma-Yoga, with unbounded courage and indomitable strength in the heart. Then only will the people of the country be roused, otherwise they will continue to be as much in the dark as you are."⁵⁵

(Chakravarty, it must be said, was at times as confused by Swamiji's teachings as was Arjuna by those of Sri Krishna. "Sir," he said at one point in his conversation with Swamiji, "now you are speaking of Jnana; but sometimes you proclaim the superiority of Bhakti, sometimes of Karma, and sometimes of Yoga. This confuses our understanding.")

("Well," Swamiji replied, "the truth is this, the knowledge

of Brahman is the ultimate goal—the highest destiny of man. But man cannot remain absorbed in Brahman all the time. When he comes out of It he must have something to engage himself. At that time he should do such work as will contribute to the real well-being of people. Therefore do I urge you in the service of Jivas in a spirit of oneness.”⁵⁶ Indeed, the karma yoga Swamiji taught and which he found in the Gita was rooted in jnana yoga, or in Advaita Vedanta; it was essentially the “worship of the Spirit by the Spirit,” and this in the marketplaces of the world.)

To Swamiji the Gita was as much a teaching for the West as for India, not only because of its monistic doctrine—“The restless Western atheist or agnostic finds in the Gita or in the *Dharmapada* the only place where his soul can anchor,”⁵⁷ he said in his 1894 “Reply to the Madras Address”—but also because of its spiritualization of activity. If India needed to move from *tamas* to *rajas*, the Western world needed to move from *rajas* to *sattva*. “Do you expect in view of the *Rajas* in the Westerners that they will gradually become *sattvika*?” Chakravarty asked Swamiji somewhat dubiously. “Certainly,” Swamiji replied. “Possessed of a plenitude of *Rajas*, they have now reached the culmination of *Bhoga*, or enjoyment. Do you think that it is not they but you,” he added scathingly, “who are going to achieve *Yoga*—you who hang about for the sake of your bellies?”⁵⁸

One might be inclined to say that Swamiji was premature in thinking that the Western people had in 1897 reached a culmination of enjoyment. But one must remember that in his vast mind, from which flowed teachings profound and diverse enough to last all of humanity for the next fifteen hundred years (as he himself was heard to say), a century swung by like a decade, and his “now” could mean, and often meant, “this epoch.” By the close of the nineteenth century the seeds of the modern age had been sown—including those sown by Swamiji himself—and as Prophets always do, he read the times in their latent form; he observed and taught on the

causal plane from which history slowly emerges and unfolds itself bit by bit.

Whether or not Western man was on the whole ready in 1900 to turn from sense-enjoyment to renunciation, it was high time, in Swamiji's view of time, for the great rajasika energy and genius of Western civilization to move forward along a new and shining path. Failing this, it would inevitably destroy itself—perhaps totally and forever. "If your ideal is mortal, if your ideal is of this earth, so shalt thou be," he warned in Pasadena when contrasting the proud, self-congratulatory and eminently smug materialism of the Western world with the all-enduring spirituality of the East. "If your ideal is matter, matter shalt thou be."⁵⁹ The secular "do-goodism" of the Social Gospel which, in its farthest vision, looked toward the goal of a materialistic (and impossible) heaven on earth, would not, as he pointed out in San Francisco, serve to spiritualize Western civilization. Wanted was the genuine sattvika activity as taught in the Gita and extended in this modern era by Swamiji himself—the concentrated, self-forgetful, wholehearted service of every man, woman, and child as a divine being, nay, as the Divine Lord. Let Western man draw from deep within himself the power to resist all weakness; let him assert and eventually realize himself as pure Spirit, lacking nothing, fearing nothing, loving all, serving all. This was in part the counsel Swamiji gave to the people of California, and it is not too surprising to find that in his lectures on the Gita at Dr. Logan's house the call for strength sounded forth like a grand finale that contained the essence of all that had gone before.

7

Before we discuss these San Francisco Gita lectures, it should be mentioned that Swamiji's earlier Sunday afternoon lecture "Sri Krishna's Message to the World" dealt almost wholly with the teachings of the Gita and can be counted among his talks

on this subject. (Indeed, the small volume *Thoughts on the Gita by Swami Vivekananda*, compiled and published by Advaita Ashrama, includes "Sri Krishna's Message to the World.") Since we have already discussed this lecture in its chronological place, we need not dwell on it again. It is interesting to remember, however, that one of the themes that wove through Swamiji's second visit to the West here mingled with one of the Gita's primary teachings, giving it added luminosity. Even as Swamiji had freed the teaching of work-with-nonattachment from any imputation of callousness, so he divested it of the puritanical grimness with which, in England and America, the very word "duty" had been cloaked. (One remembers how at Thousand Island Park Swamiji's Methodist hostess, Miss Dutcher, took to her bed in shock after he had said in class, "The idea of duty is the midday sun of misery scorching the very soul!" As Sister Christine tells it, "his rebellion against the idea that anyone should dare bind with fetters the soul of man" gave Miss Dutcher such a turn that she was not seen again for some days.)¹

"Work day and night . . . without any idea of duty," Swamiji cried in "Sri Krishna's Message." "... This world is a play. You are His playmates. Go on and work, without any sorrow, without any misery! . . . Serve the living God! . . . Then work is no more slavery. It becomes a play and joy itself!"²

As has been said, the three Gita lectures at Dr. Logan's house were given on the evenings of Saturday, May 26; Monday, May 28; and Tuesday, May 29. They were, in a sense, public lectures, for admission was charged and, presumably, whoever happened to learn that Swami Vivekananda was to deliver a lecture could, for fifty cents, come to hear him. On the other hand, the lectures were not advertised in the newspapers, and thus, except for members of the Vedanta Society and the Homes of Truth, few people were apt to learn of them. In this respect they were private, almost invitational. Yet the audiences were not small; indeed according to the Minutes of the Vedanta Society, they were "large," and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

whatever "large" may have meant in terms of numbers (we do not know the seating capacity of Dr. Logan's house), it surely indicated that the attendance matched and perhaps exceeded expectations. According to Mr. Rhodehamel, who wrote of Swamiji's Gita classes in his memoirs as published in *Prabuddha Bharata*, "these lectures were attended mainly by students who had followed the Swami through all or most of his discourses and classes in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda, and were in character as well as in point of time the culmination of all his platform and class work. They were his final words of advice and admonition to his students and devotees."³

In his first lecture Swamiji dealt primarily with the historical background of the Gita. He did not, as he had done in India, cast doubt on the historicity of the circumstances under which Sri Krishna delivered his teaching, for such scholarly considerations were of little concern to the Western layman. He did, however, speak of the ancient and long conflict between the priests and the kings, between the religion of the ritualistic portion of the Vedas and that of the philosophical portion, which "came from the brains of kings." He pointed out the economic basis of this fierce conflict. "There runs an economic struggle through every religious struggle," he said. "If there is an economical background," Miss Ansell's first transcript reads, "and you have the most hideous nonsense to preach, you can find the whole country [will follow you]."⁴ "Whenever any religion succeeds it must have economic value. Thousands of similar sects will be struggling for power, but only those that meet the real economic problem will have it. Man is guided by his stomach. He walks and the stomach goes first and the head afterwards. Have you not seen that? It will take ages for the head to go first."⁵ It is not the priests, Swamiji pointed out, who are so much to blame for holding the minds of the people in a state of bondage; it is, rather, the people themselves who employ the priests to appease their hunger with promises.

There is evidence in Ida Ansell's first transcript that Swamiji

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

discussed in this lecture the economic aspect of the struggle between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas at considerable length, pointing out parallels in other great religions and dealing in some detail with the significance of the conflict to India. Unfortunately, however, this portion of the transcript is so shreddy that one cannot reconstruct Swamiji's train of thought. The second (published) transcript was evidently as deficient in this respect as the first, and thus we lack an important part of the lecture—a part evidently so interesting that Miss Ansell was too absorbed to take intelligible notes. However, it is clear from fragmentary sentences in her first transcript that Swamiji analyzed one of India's recurrent problems—the conflict between an enslaving religion of superstition and priestcraft and a liberating religion of supreme spiritual knowledge. In resolving it, “the whole secret,” Swamiji said, “is to find out the proper place for everything”; and this, Sri Krishna did. “He is the most rounded man I know of, wonderfully developed equally in brain and heart and hand. Every moment of his is alive with activity, either as a gentleman, warrior, minister, or something else. Great as a gentleman, as a scholar, as a poet. . . . Just think what an influence this man has over the whole world, whether you know it or not. My regard for him is for his perfect sanity. No cobwebs in that brain, no superstition. He knows the use of everything, and when it is necessary to assign a place to each, he is there.”⁶

In his next lecture Swamiji took up the whole of the second chapter of the Gita almost verse for verse, mingling his free translations and his commentaries in so smooth a flow of thought and language that one can scarcely tell where translation leaves off and commentary begins. Again, his commentary on one verse leads with perfect naturalness into his translation of the next. In Miss Ansell's first transcript one finds blended into the almost seamless flow of Swamiji's discourse, which he apparently did not often interrupt with Sanskrit, his free translation of forty-two verses, not all of which have been

included, or noted, in the published version. But even the first transcript does not give us everything that Swamiji's lecture actually contained. Those who have read the published version in the *Complete Works* may have wondered why he skipped over some of the most beautiful and important verses of this second chapter of the Gita—verses 19 through 27, in which Sri Krishna describes the indestructibility and immutability of the Self or Atman.

The key to this mystery is to be found in Ida Ansell's first transcript. There, on the bottom of page 10 one finds a portion of what is clearly verse 19: "He who thinks that he can kill and that he..." Below this line of typing one detects that a notation had been written in pencil and erased. Held in the proper light, the following message in Miss Ansell's hand becomes legible: "A page of shorthand was lost at this point." Why this intelligence was erased is not clear, for the lost page of shorthand, which had undoubtedly contained Swamiji's translation of and commentary on some of the most well-known and well-loved verses of the Gita, was not found. At least, when Miss Ansell made her second set of transcripts, verses 19 through 27 were still missing. (There are no ellipsis points in the published transcript to indicate this sad loss. They should come between the paragraph ending "You are all the world. Who can help you?" and that beginning "'Beings are unknown to our human senses before birth and after death...'"⁷)

Despite this large hole in the text, Swamiji's lecture is a masterpiece of fluidity and vitality. I need not here describe it paragraph for paragraph, for it is readily available in the *Complete Works*; nor does the second transcript differ in any appreciable or noteworthy degree from the first. I shall, however, quote those passages in which Swamiji seems to have become particularly eloquent and forceful, as though wishing to imbue his listeners and perhaps impregnate the very air with the heroic spirit of the Gita. He no doubt saw that Western man was entering an age in which, on the one hand, he would require, for his very survival, to become more and more active,

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

more and more altruistic, more and more rational, more and more idealistic, but in which, on the other hand, he would find that all his old values, traditions, and faiths, including a faith in his own fundamental goodness and rationality, would be, as it were, yanked from under his feet, leaving him sprawled in fear, moral uncertainty, spiritual aridity, and self-doubt. To an age in which the individual *must* be strong but in which the old safeguards against moral erosion had themselves eroded, Swamiji emphasized the Gita's bracing philosophy of the Self, and, like Sri Krishna, he cried to the individual, "Stand up and fight!"

"One great theme," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote in recalling Swamiji's Gita lectures, "was carried through all the Swami's teaching, and that was the necessity for spiritual self-reliance. 'Religion is for the strong,' he shouted again and again. So in conclusion he took up the Gita, dwelling on the error of Arjuna in confounding his spiritual welfare with the disinclination to tread the stern path of duty as it was laid out for him by the energies of his nature which had not yet been neutralized by spiritual culture. He made it clear, however, that Arjuna really did know his duty, but that his eyes were temporarily blinded by his moral weakness in facing the supreme crisis of his life because apparently it led into the jaws of death. He further brought out the point that Arjuna fortified his position by spiritual sophistry."⁸

Indeed, never before, as far as we know, had Swamiji brought out this particular message of Sri Krishna's with such intensity. Cowardice by whatever name was death. "Not one step back, that is the idea," he thundered. (I quote this paragraph from Miss Ansell's first transcript.) "No bending the knee. Always stiffening the backbone. Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the spheres, the whole world stand against us. Death means only a change of garment. What more? Thus fight thou. You gain nothing by becoming cowards, come what may. Either there is a God that wills everything, and in that case we cannot fight, or it is our own

[karma]. Taking one step backward, we do not avoid any misfortune. We have cried to all the gods in the worlds. Has misery ceased? The masses of India cry to sixty million gods. Dying like dogs. Where are these gods? Gods come to help you when you have succeeded. . . . So what is the use of [crying]? Die game. Stand up and die game, come what may. There is a beautiful mythological story. There were two angels in God's Paradise. They did something wrong and were cursed that they should fall and become man. When falling, they cried, 'Lord, is there no mercy for us? How many births shall we have?' The Lord said, 'Seven births as worshippers, but only three as enemies.' They [chose to be enemies of] the gods and got out quick. The more you cling to superstitions and priests and [fear] you make the hell here. Hell is here. There is no other place. This impotence does not befit thee. Awake and rise. It does not befit thee, this weakness, this bending the knee to superstitions, this selling yourselves to your own minds. Because we are infinite spirits, it does not befit thee to be the slave in the battle of nerves, to be the slave to superstition. . . . No weakness in thee. Stand up and fight. Die if you must. Die game. There is none to help you. Thou art all the world. Who helps thee?"⁹

As he had done many times before in San Francisco, Swamiji stressed the teaching that "spirituality can never be attained unless all material ideas are given up." "We have identified ourselves with our bodies," he said in this second Gita lecture. ". . . All this chain of misery, imagination, animals, gods and demons, everything, the whole world—all this comes from the identification of our selves with the body. I am spirit. Why do I jump if you pinch me? . . . Look at the slavery of it. Are you not ashamed? We are religious! We are philosophers! We are sages! Lord bless us! What are we? Living hells, that is what we are. Lunatics, that is what we are!" And with one of his jolting metaphors, he cried, "Our ideas are burial grounds. When we leave the body we are bound by thousands of elements to those ideas." "The oceanlike heart of the sage knows no

disturbance, knows no fear," he concluded. "Let miseries come in millions of rivers and happiness in hundreds! I am no slave to misery! I am no slave to happiness!"¹⁰

In his next lecture, delivered on May 29, Swamiji discussed the third chapter of the Gita and a part of the fourth, again translating many verses, commenting upon them, and giving his own teachings in one powerful, unbroken flow. Again he stressed the all-important goal of identification with the Spirit. "You may be the greatest philosopher," he said, "but as long as you have the idea that you are the body, you are no better than the little worm crawling under your foot! No excuse for you! So much the worse for you, that you know all the philosophies and at the same time think you are the body! Body-god, that is what you are! Is that religion? Religion is the realisation of spirit as spirit."¹¹

He explained the meaning behind the doctrine of nonattachment, bringing in here a good deal of Sankhya philosophy; and again he explained the rationale and wisdom behind Sri Krishna's teaching that it is "better to die in your own path than attempt the path of another." He related this directly to the necessity for religious independence. "We must not lose sight of this doctrine," he said. "It is all a matter of growth. Wait and grow, and you attain everything; otherwise there will be great spiritual danger. Here is the fundamental secret of teaching religion. . . . The true teacher will be able to find out for you what your own nature is. . . . He ought to know by a glance at your face and put you on your path. . . . Then die in that path rather than giving it up and taking hold of another. Instead, we start a religion and make a set of dogmas and betray the goal of mankind and treat everyone as having the same nature. No two persons have the same mind or the same body. No two persons have the same religion."¹²

Here Swamiji cried, as he had done many times before in San Francisco, "Enter not the gate of any organized religions. They do a hundred times more evil than good, because they stop the growth of each one's individual development. Study

everything, but keep your own seat firm. If you take my advice, do not put your neck into the trap."¹³

His commentary upon verse 11 of chapter four is particularly Swamiji-like. " 'But know, Arjuna, none can ever swerve from My path.' "¹⁴ Generally this is interpreted to mean that all ways of worship are acceptable to God and that He fulfills the desires of each man, whether it be for worldly gain or for Liberation. Swamiji went further: There is no way of being, no way of conduct, that is not within God's law and acceptable to Him. 'None swerves from His path.' Transgression is impossible. "If it is a law," he pointed out, "it cannot be broken. . . . The moment a law is broken, no more universe exists. There will come a time when you will break the law, and that moment your consciousness, mind, and body will melt away."¹⁵ You will, in other words, have attained *moksha*. But until then only imperfect, man-made rules are broken, not Divine Law. Following his own nature, the thief, for instance, is moving through one experience after another toward God. According to an even higher view, the thief is God Himself. He is perfectly playing a part in the infinitely diversified, endlessly burgeoning universe. "There is a man stealing there," Swamiji said. "Why does he steal? You punish him. Why can you not make room for him and put his energy to work? You say, 'You are a sinner,' and many will say he has broken the law. All this herd of mankind is forced into uniformity and hence all this trouble, sin, and weakness. . . . The world is not as bad as you think. It is we fools who have made it evil. . . . God made the heaven, and man made the hell for himself."¹⁶

Swamiji concluded his last lecture on the Gita (and his last lecture in California) with a resounding call, which, though long, will bear being repeated here—at least in part:

"Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked I return. Helpless I came and helpless I go. Helpless I am now. And we do not know the goal. It is terrible for us to think about it. We get such odd ideas! We go to a medium and see if the ghost can help us. Think of the weakness! Ghosts, devils,

gods, anybody—come on! And all the priests, all the charlatans! That is just the time they get hold of us, the moment we are weak. Then they bring in all the gods. . . . Help, anyone! But we are helpless. There is no help from anyone. That is the truth. There have been more gods than human beings; and yet no help. We die like dogs—no help. Everywhere beastliness, famine, disease, misery, evil! And all are crying for help. But no help. And yet, hoping against hope, we are still screaming for help. Oh, the miserable condition! Oh, the terror of it! Look into your own heart! One half of the trouble is not our fault, but the fault of our parents. Born with this weakness, more and more of it was put into our heads. Step by step we go beyond it.

“It is a tremendous error to feel helpless. Do not seek help from anyone. We are our own help. If we cannot help ourselves, there is none to help us. ‘Thou thyself art thy only friend, thou thyself thy only enemy. There is no other enemy but this self of mine, no other friend but myself.’ This is the last and greatest lesson, and oh, what a time it takes to learn it! We seem to get hold of it, and the next moment the old wave comes. The backbone breaks. We weaken and again grasp for that superstition and help. Just think of that huge mass of misery, and all caused by this false idea of going to seek for help! . . .

“There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, faces everything, and determines to die game. Stand up and die game! Do not add one lunacy to another. Do not add your weakness to the evil that is going to come. That is all I have to say to the world. Be strong!

“You believe in God. If you do, believe in the real God. ‘Thou art the man, thou the woman, thou the young man walking in the strength of youth, thou the old man tottering with his stick.’ Thou art weakness. Thou art fear. Thou art heaven, and thou art hell. Thou art the serpent that would sting. Come thou as fear! Come thou as death! Come thou as misery!

“All weakness, all bondage is imagination. Speak one word

to it, it must vanish. Do not weaken! There is no other way out. Stand up and be strong! No fear. No superstition. Face the truth as it is! If death comes—that is the worst of our miseries—let it come! We are determined to die game. That is all the religion I know. I have not attained to it, but I am struggling to do it. I may not, but you may. Go on!”¹⁷

This was Swamiji’s last word in San Francisco and its impact was tremendous. Eighteen years later Mr. Rhodhamel was to write of the Gita classes as though they had been held only the day before. “He stood before us arrayed in his Sannyasi garb,” he recalled, “reading from the original Sanskrit, translating and expounding. With a few prefatory remarks on the first chapter he launched into the second chapter. The great point he brought out was the attitude of mind one should assume in meeting the real problems of life. The greatest obstacle to the right attitude of mind, he said, was fear of the difficult. So he said, ‘Be brave! Be strong! Be fearless! Once you have taken up the spiritual life, fight as long as there is any life in you. Even though you know you are going to be killed, fight till you *are killed*. Don’t die of fright. *Die fighting*. Don’t go down till you are *knocked down*.’ Then with his right arm extended he thundered, ‘Die game! Die game! Die game!’ That one sentence rang through those last lectures, ‘Die game! Die game! Die game!’ They were his farewell words to his disciples, his goodbye.”¹⁸

8

“The Swami Vivekananda delivered his 3rd and last lecture on the Bhagavad Gita before a most interested audience at Dr. Logan’s residence. . . ,” the Minutes of the Vedanta Society for May 29 read, and continue:

After a most instructive and impressive lecture, he answered as usual many questions.

Dr. Logan then announced that Swami Vivekananda had received a call to lecture at the Paris Exposition, and

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

that he was going to leave the following morning, Wednesday, May 30th, for Paris.

Dr. Plumb then presented the Swami with the money collected from his lectures, for which the Swami thanked most heartily.

The Swami then told the people present that he would send them a most spiritual Swami by name of Swami Turiyananda. He then bid them all good-bye.¹

("He left us with these humble words," Mr. Rhodehamel wrote of Swamiji's farewell to the Vedanta Class: 'I will send you another, a greater than I, one who lives what I talk about. I will send you Swami Turiyananda.'")²

The following morning Swamiji crossed the Bay for the last time and boarded the Southern Pacific's *Overland Limited* at the Oakland mole. Many of his friends must have seen him off, but none knew this was to be their final parting. Even Mrs. Hansbrough had not understood that at Dr. Logan's she had seen Swamiji for the last time. "He took the greatest interest in the people and in 'the movement' and in whom he would send to carry on after he left the Pacific Coast," she later said. "I am sure that if his health had permitted, he would have come to the West a third time."³ Mrs. Allan had also been certain he would return. "I shall come back,"⁴ Swamiji had told her, and he had, of course, meant it. He liked California, finding it a "great field" for Vedanta. Californians, in turn, liked Swamiji. Those who knew him, who followed him and looked upon him as their spiritual teacher and master adored him. How deeply they did so is reflected in a tribute by the "San Francisco Class of Vedanta Philosophy" to its "Great Leader" when word of Swamiji's death in July of 1902 reached California. Addressed to his "Brother Sannyasins at the Math in India," it was published in the *Pacific Vedantin* of August 1902 and two months later in the *Brahmavadin*. It read in part as follows:

... Our beloved has followed Him for whom his favorite

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

theme was "My Master." Never has man written sweeter things of one he loved. As he loved and revered his Master, so we will love and cherish his sacred memory. He was one of the greatest souls that has visited the earth for many centuries. An incarnation of his Master, of Krishna, Buddha, Christ and all other great souls. He came fitted to fill the needs of the times as they are now. His was a twin soul to that of his Master, who represented the whole philosophy of all religions be they ancient or modern. Vivekananda has shaken the whole world with his sublime thoughts, and they will echo down through the halls of time until time shall be no more. To him all people and all creeds were one. He had the patience of Christ and the generosity of the sun that shines and the air of heaven. To him a child could talk, a beggar, a prince, a slave or harlot. He said: "They are all of one family, I can see myself in all of them and they in me. The world is one family, and its parent an Infinite Ocean of Reality, Brahman."

Nature had given him a physique beautiful to look upon, with features of an Apollo. But nature had not woven the warp and woof of his mortal frame so that it might withstand the wear and tear of a tremendous will within and the urgent calls from without. For he gave himself to a waiting world. Coming to this country as he did, a young man, a stranger in a foreign land, and meeting with the modern world's choicest divines, and holding those great and critical audiences of the World's Congress of Religions in reverential awe, with his high Spiritual Philosophy and sublime oratory, was an unusual strain for one so young. No other person stood out with such magnificent individuality; no creed or dogma could so stand. No other one had a message of such magnitude. Professors of our great universities listened with profound respect. "Compared to whose gigantic intellect these were as mere children," "This great Hindoo Cyclone has

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

shaken the world;" this was said after he passed through Detroit, Mich. No tongue was foreign to him, no people and no clime were strange. The whole world was his field of labor....

...He is to us what Jesus Christ is to many devout Christians...We consider that we were exceedingly fortunate to have known him in the flesh, to have communed with him in person and to have felt the sweet influence of his Divine presence....

...RESOLVED, That this expression of our love and affection for our dear departed Master be spread upon the records of the Class, and that copies thereof be forwarded to his fellow Sannyasins at the Math in India • and elsewhere.⁵

The above was signed on behalf of the Vedanta Society by the president, Milburn H. Logan; the vice-president, Carl F. Petersen, and the secretary, Albert S. Wollberg.

Even those who knew Swamiji less well, those who attended his lectures but who did not become students of Vedanta or members of the Society—even they held him in profound esteem and affection. One such Californian—the young woman from the *San Francisco Chronicle* who had interviewed him in March and who had evidently attended his lectures with more than journalistic interest, took the trouble to speak for her fellow citizens in appreciation of this extraordinary visitor from India. While Swamiji was resting at Camp Taylor, his public work finished, Blanche Partington wrote a heartfelt letter, dated May 9, 1900, to the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. It was published in the June issue and later, in part, in the first edition of the *Life* (to be subsequently dropped). I quote it here in full as it first appeared:

To the Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*,

From the West, to you, greeting!

If we may presume a comparative interest in California,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in the land towards which our attention has recently been so forcefully turned, the land which has given us the master-thinker, and teacher, Swami Vivekananda, then will the following small account of the Vedanta work in California prove not uninteresting to your readers.

The Swami Vivekananda came to the "Golden State" some five months ago now, a stranger in a strange land, and, except to those fortunate few who heard him at the World's Fair, Chicago, entirely unknown. For some weeks he remained in Los Angeles, in the southern part of the state, teaching in the "City of Angels" amidst much quiet enthusiasm, and with happy results, and from thence he came to San Francisco, capital [principal] city of California. Here his success was immediate. The first audience which greeted him, on February 18th [25th], at the First Unitarian Church, Oakland, numbered over two thousand people, who listened to his words with keenest attention, and enthusiastic sympathy. Since that time, between forty and fifty lectures have been delivered by the Swami, in San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda, on the various phases of the Vedanta Philosophy, and conditions and life in India. His teaching has aroused a widespread attention here, and will undoubtedly have a strong influence upon the religious thought of California. Three classes, for the further study of the Vedanta Philosophy, have been formed, in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda, and it is possible that if the conditions are favourable, the Swami Vivekananda will send out to us another teacher. He himself regards California as a country peculiarly well-suited to the development of Oriental Philosophies, its climatic conditions especially kind, its strange intermixtures of races a fruitful soil wherein to plant this new-old thought, its youth a promise and potency of growth.

The impression made by the Swami's teaching has been most profound, the impress of his brilliant and distinguished personality,—what he is,—not less, but even

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

deeper than his spoken word, strange and electrifying to us to see, the face of the warrior-thinker leap like a sword from its scabbard as the child-likeness of the master's countenance falls away under the power of the spirit! Dear and beautiful to see his absolute kindliness to all with whom he comes in contact, his admirable simplicity of manner, his charming humility, and strange and lovely to our unaccustomed ears the music of his words, his wonderful eloquence in a foreign tongue, for the Swami Vivekananda is more than teacher, master, philosopher, he is a poet from the land of poetry!

The Swami is still among us, though he is living in retirement with some good friends. The end of the lecture course found him much exhausted, but at last hearing, he was much better, and on the high road to recovery. From here he goes to New York, and from thence to Paris, remaining with us, however, for some few weeks longer.⁶

About the same time, Miss Partington wrote also to the *Brahmavadin*. Her letter to this magazine was published in its July 1900 issue and, like the above, was later printed in the first edition of the *Life*. As the *Brahmavadin* letter was somewhat repetitious of that in *Prabuddha Bharata*, I shall give it here only in part:

All hail the Light of Asia! [she began]. Thus, poet, sage, and devotee in speaking of the advent of the Swami Vivekananda upon our Western shores! It were not difficult to you who know him, to understand the vivid and profound impression made by this brilliant and charming personality upon all those with whom he comes in contact, and the temptation to extravagance in speaking of him and his work. But we will attempt such sweet reasonableness as is possible to us, in this little appreciation of one of the deepest thinkers and finest spirits who has yet visited among us for our blessing and delight.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

To some extent, California was prepared for the simple-subtle teaching of this Oriental sage. First came to us, some years ago, the white-robed Brahmacharin with his message [I do not know to whom Miss Partington refers], then Dharmapala of the imperial yellow garb, and there has been here for some time a Buddhist church, and much thought along theosophical lines, besides all the usual orthodox developments, each in its place, lower steps of the temple to which the latest and greatest of these, the Vedanta Philosophy, is leading....

The interest in [Swami Vivekananda's] doctrine has been steadily increasing,—even reaching the hopeful limit of a mild martyrdom of pulpit denunciation!—and, though it is yet early to prophesy results, it seems safe to say that the enthusiasm thus awakened is of a permanent character....

Had we been able to claim for our climate a perfect kindness to the Swami Vivekananda, our measure of content had been full, and it is perhaps rather owing to his lavish gift of his strength in our service, than to the climate, that the later days of his lectures here found him somewhat seriously indisposed. But the last word from him, he is now in retirement with some good friends in the country, tells of renewed strength and vigor, and we shall surely send him to his next stopping place, New York, in perfect health again.

Greeting to all our good friends in India, think sometimes of the new children of your thought in California.⁷

One may, I think, look upon Miss Partington as a spokesman for the generality of those who attended Swamiji's lectures in northern California. She was not a close student of religion; she was a member of the California public, one of those open-minded, generous, and appreciative people who had led Swamiji to believe that California was a great field. He had held that view in the early days of his visit; he still held it after

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

he left. "Swami Vivekananda had at one time or another visited all parts of the United States," Swami Abhedananda told a member of the San Francisco Vedanta Society many years later. "But when he came back to New York from California, he asked me to go there. 'California,' he told me, 'is the place where Vedanta will grow.' " And Swami Abhedananda had himself added, "The people there are sympathetic and open."⁸

There is no doubt that during the six months Swamiji had lived and worked in California a close bond had grown up between him and the many people who knew him—the indissoluble bond between guru and disciple; and it is no wonder that when his train pulled out from the Oakland mole, no one could think that he would not return.

9

Swamiji did indeed intend to return to California; yet as things turned out, this departure was his farewell. It also marked the close of his intensive and prolonged period of public platform work during this second visit in the West. It is true, as we shall see a little later, that he was to deliver four Sunday lectures and hold several classes in New York, but these were semipublic talks given at weekly intervals during the hot and slack summer-vacation month of June. Again as we shall see, he was to lecture twice before the Paris Congress of Religions—speaking on strictly technical and scholarly subjects. Valuable these post-California talks surely were, but his California lectures and classes, to which he gave so much of his concentrated energy for so long and steady a time, constituted, as I see it, the heart of his work during this period of his life.

A question that naturally arises at this point is whether there was any significant difference between the teachings of his second visit to the West, as judged by what we know of his many California talks, and the teachings of his first visit. I have tried to answer this question somewhat prematurely and thus

only in half measure in an earlier chapter. I shall try to answer it here more fully, for I believe it is an important one.

First of all, we must review, in a very general way, what Swamiji taught and did during his first visit to the Western world—the visit that extended from the end of July, 1893, to the middle of December, 1896, in which he lectured and held classes in both America and England. One can divide this visit into two parts, each of which can be further divided in two. There was, first, the period between his arrival in Chicago and the end of 1894, and second, that between the beginning of 1895 and his departure for India at the close of 1896. The first period falls into two uneven parts: the days before the Parliament of Religions, which opened in Chicago on September 11, 1893, and the days, or rather months, extending from his first address at the Parliament (which at once brought him into the widened eye of the American public) to the close of 1894. The second period can be divided (roughly) into 1895 and 1896.

During the six weeks or so prior to the Parliament of Religions, Swamiji's purpose, with which he had come to America and upon which he had set his mind and heart, was to explain to the people of the United States that the Hindus desperately required not religion, of which they had plenty and to spare, but bread and a technological education. Still full of faith in the generosity and idealism of the American people, he believed that a direct and simple explanation of India's real need would be enough and that rich Americans, learning the facts, would readily respond with help. With this purpose and this faith in mind, Swamiji lectured when possible before small New England audiences on the subject of his Motherland, telling of his plan to start a technological college for monks, who would, in turn, give a practical education to villagers throughout the country. It was not long before he discovered the fruitlessness of this procedure. If not earlier than the Parliament of Religions, then certainly during it, it became unmistakably clear to him that America's ignorance of India had, on the whole,

a positive quality about it: it was rock-hard, layers deep, and characterized by an obdurate distrust of and contempt for anything Hindu. It was, moreover, fortified continually through the sensational denigration of India by less-than-loving Christian missionaries and by the eagerness of the parishioners at home to listen and believe.

After the Parliament of Religions, Swamiji, now famous, determined to earn the money that he needed for his Indian work by lecturing throughout the United States and, by means of his lectures, to give Americans a true picture of Hindu culture and religion. This last was not a matter of merely supplying information; it was a matter also of first blasting away boulders of solidified ignorance, and this, by the very force of his personality, Swamiji accomplished to a great extent. He was, as he wrote to a disciple in India, "the one man who dared defend his country." "And I have given them such ideas," he added, "as they never expected from a Hindu."¹ Swamiji's very appearance, his majesty of bearing combined with a child-like simplicity and friendliness, his perfect command of English, his brilliance of intellect, his apparently unending wealth of knowledge, his lofty idealism, which, as many admitted, towered over the highest reaches of Western thought, his manifest spiritual eminence and greatness of heart—all this, as well as his inspiring lectures on his Motherland, gave the lie in undeniable terms to almost everything concerning India that the American people had been led to believe and that had theretofore gone uncontradicted and unchallenged.

Thousands of Americans heard this phenomenal Hindu monk and applauded him—and inevitably that applause brought down upon him the enmity of every zealous bigot in the country. The story of the hue and cry that arose around Swamiji's heels, of the viciousness with which he was attacked—and this not only by Americans but, incredibly, by some of his own countrymen as well—has been told in some detail in *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* and need not be

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

repeated here. Suffice it to say that partly by the information he gave, partly by simply standing as living testimony to the greatness of his parent culture, and partly by the tremendous spiritual power that radiated from him, Swamiji silenced his opponents and strengthened the force of tolerance and understanding in America.

The battle he thus fought and won on behalf of his countrymen constituted one of the primary aspects of his work during the months following the Parliament of Religions. During this period, however, he did more than exonerate his country from the charge of benighted heathenism. He was quick to see, as he toured through the United States, the need of the American people for spiritual sustenance. If India required a technical education, America required with as much urgency a spiritual one. He began to give it. He pointed out the underlying unity of all religions, spreading his Master's teaching in this regard; he taught the essential meaning and purpose of religion itself and declared each religion and creed to represent a valid step in the soul's progress toward the highest spiritual attainment. We also find that during this period he lectured many times on Buddhism, possibly because there was in America a growing interest in and appreciation of Gautama Buddha, but more probably because he was keenly aware that the full development of self-reliance, rationality, and compassion as taught and exemplified by this great Teacher would be essential to man's success in the world of the future. Swamiji also spoke many times throughout this period of the unselfish nature of true Divine Love. He scathingly berated average churchgoing Christians for their "shopkeeping" brand of devotion: "Christians are so selfish in their love," he said in Detroit, "that they are continually asking God to give them something, including all manner of selfish things. Modern religion is, therefore, nothing but a mere hobby and fashion and people flock to church like a lot of sheep."² He thundered against the degrading concept that human beings are "miserable sinners," and spoke with electrifying eloquence and power of the eternal,

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

unchanging divinity of the individual soul and the divine unity of all men.

Further as he toured through the United States, meeting thousands of people, visiting uncouneted towns and cities, Swamiji sowed the seeds of spirituality in another and deeper sense. On a level that defies the tools of research but that we nonetheless know exists, he played the role of World Teacher and Prophet, silently setting in motion a new current of thought in the collective mind of the nation—a current, the beneficent effects of which will become visible on the surface of human affairs only slowly, but the reality of which we cannot doubt, for the spiritual stature of Swami Vivekananda was such that he could not live among men without altering, enriching, and illuminating the very texture of world thought. Indeed, to ignite men's minds not for a brief, passing moment but on deep, subliminal levels and, consequently, for long sweeps of time is surely the primary function and meaning of that marvelous phenomenon, divine prophethood, that miracle by which humanity has many times been set aglow in its long history and which has thereby many times lifted that history out of its otherwise violent, humdrum, and more or less predictable course.

There is a good deal of evidence, which we need not go into here (it has been set forth and discussed at some length in *Swami Vivekananda in America*), that in the latter part of 1894 Swamiji's thought was coming to grips with the immensely complex and multifarious problems of the modern age and formulating root-destroying solutions to them for the Western world. It was, indeed, on the last day but one of 1894 that he made the highly significant and startling statement: "I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East." At the beginning of 1895 he settled down in one place to give that message in all its extraordinary comprehensiveness and diversity. Earlier he had scattered broadcast the seeds of Vedanta; he now delivered his teachings in concentrated, though infinitely varied, form, developing a permanent center from which they would spread outward like waves of force.

During the first five months of 1895, Swamiji lived in New York in unfashionably located rooms where he held free classes twice daily, supporting them (for most of his students were poor, and he wished to be independent of those who were rich and inclined to be bossy) by delivering from time to time pay public lectures. After a brief rest in June at the New Hampshire summer camp of his friend Mr. Francis Leggett (who was not yet married to Miss MacLeod's sister, Betty Sturges), he spent some six weeks at Thousand Island Park in the secluded home of one of his students. Here, surrounded by a few selected disciples (twelve in all), he taught Vedanta with even greater intensity than he had in New York, for his hope at this time was to "manufacture a few 'Yogis' out of the materials of the [New York] classes,"⁴ or, as he also put it, to "make several Sannyasins, . . . leaving the work to them."⁵

During the latter part of 1895, Swamiji spent a large part of his time in London, where laying the foundation for future work, he held classes, gave talks in private houses, and delivered one public lecture. At the beginning of December he returned to New York for his second season of class work and lecturing in the United States.

Although Swamiji's activity in 1895 comprised an untold number of classes and unquestionably forms a part of his main teaching mission in the West, very little of what he taught during this year has come down to us in printed form. Indeed, with the notable exception of the slim but invaluable book *Inspired Talks*, which contains notes of his informal classes at Thousand Island Park, no effort seems to have been made to preserve Swamiji's classes and lectures of this period. A number of references scattered here and there, however, leave very little doubt that in his New York classes he dealt with the four yogas, or paths: jnana, raja, bhakti, and karma. That he taught these yogas in his London classes is also very likely. As for his New York lectures of this period, only the titles of five are known to us, but those five tell us much. They are: "The Vedanta Philosophy," "The Science of Religion," "The

Rationale of Yoga," "What is Vedanta?" and "What is Yoga?" Clearly, Swamiji had started to give the great body of teachings on the philosophy and practice of Vedanta which acquired permanent form during the following season of his work. The title of his one public lecture in London—"Self Knowledge"—is as revealing.

The year of 1896 (or, to be exact, the period extending from December 9, 1895, to December 16, 1896) was the year of golden harvest. During this period Swamiji produced almost all the works that, together, form the primary message of his first visit to the West. The priceless heritage that has come down to us from this period includes the books *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, and *Jnana Yoga*. In addition one finds in the *Complete Works* many important lectures and class talks delivered in 1896 in America and London. There are, for instance, some eight lectures on Sankhya and Vedanta, given as New York classes and later published in book form under the title *The Science and Philosophy of Religion*; further class talks on bhakti yoga; the important Harvard lecture "The Vedanta Philosophy"; a number of lectures delivered in London, such as "Vedanta and Privilege," which are not included in *Jnana Yoga*; and two lectures on Sri Ramakrishna (combined in the *Complete Works* into one, under the title "My Master").

This list does not exhaust our inherited treasure of 1896 but will serve to show the importance of that year. (One might take the view that the reason 1896 was so fruitful was not because Swamiji's message was more ripe by that time than it had been earlier, but because Mr. Josiah J. Goodwin was then by his side, faithfully taking shorthand notes and transcribing them. It is true that without Mr. Goodwin's labor we would know as little of Swamiji's lectures and classes of 1896 as we know about those of 1895. But one is inclined to believe that in the rhythmic nature of Swamiji's mission Mr. Goodwin appeared on the scene exactly when he began to give those lectures he wished to publish in permanent book form—and not before. However, this is a point we need not settle here.)

What concerns us at present is the message, in general, that Swamiji gave during this last part of his first visit to the West. Fortunately—for it is difficult and risky to try to condense into a few sentences the substance of his teachings during any period of his mission—he himself has done this for us. In the front of his book *Raja Yoga* one finds as a sort of summary of his teaching the well-known lines, taken from his commentary on aphorism 25 of chapter two of the *Yoga Aphorisms* of Patanjali: “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature: external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples or forms, are but secondary details.”

Again, when Swamiji opened his second season in New York, there appeared in the *New York Herald* a brief outline of his teachings, which, it would seem, he himself had given to an interviewer. The paragraph, subheaded “The Doctrines of the Swami,” read:

The following is a brief sketch of the Swami’s fundamental teachings: “Every man must develop according to his own nature, as every science has its methods, so has every religion. Methods of attaining the end of our religion are called *yoga*, and the forms of *yoga* that we teach are adapted to the different natures and temperaments of men. We classify them in the following way, under four heads:

“(1) Karma Yoga—The manner in which a man realizes his own divinity through works and duty.

“(2) Bhakti Yoga—The realization of a [*sic*] divinity through devotion to and love of a personal God.

“(3) Rajah Yoga—The realization of divinity through control of mind.

“(4) Gnana Yoga—The realization of a man’s own divinity through knowledge.

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

“These are all different roads leading to the same centre—God. Indeed, the varieties of religious belief are an advantage, since all faiths are good, so far as they encourage man to religious life. The more sects there are, the more opportunities there are for making successful appeals to the divine instinct in all men.”⁶

Later in the year Swamiji put his doctrine even more succinctly. In a letter to Sister Nivedita (then Margaret Noble) he wrote, “My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.”⁷ Throughout his mission this ideal—to preach unto mankind their divinity—was central to Swamiji’s teaching. It was indeed more than central; it was the ground in which all else was rooted and the light toward which all else aspired. During his first visit he taught a wide variety of ways by which people of all temperaments and stages of spiritual advancement could move toward the realization of their own divine nature. He taught, further, that these ways, singly or combined, represented the different forms or expressions of the world’s religious beliefs and practices. Each had the same goal, each was inspired by the same human yearning for and struggle toward divine infinitude.

He taught, as we have seen, the four primary paths or yogas, giving them, it would appear, equal attention. He explained the three main philosophies of Vedanta: dualism, qualified monism, and monism, showing that the first two (which are more theologies than philosophies) were necessary steps in mankind’s upward journey to the third, monism, beyond which no greater truth could be known or conceived. He taught the utmost tolerance for—or, rather, acceptance of—all religious forms, showing that each had its place in the soul’s progress from “lower truth to higher truth,” that none should be condemned.

In addition, he taught how monistic Vedanta could stand as the broad basis for lasting harmony between the rich and

jostling variety of peoples, races, cultures, religions, and ideologies of which human society is, and must ever be, composed. He explained the cosmologies of Vedanta and Sankhya and the psychology of Yoga, and he showed how these, as well as the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, reconcile the apparently contradictory findings and attitudes of science and religion, reason and mysticism, everyday life and spiritual practice. He showed how Vedanta answers the big, ever-recurrent and often anguished questions of whither, why, and whence, which Western philosophy, mired in an essentially materialistic outlook, was in a few years to pronounce unanswerable. He enlarged man's concept of God, of the world, and of himself, expanding them, indeed, to Infinity. He transformed human life itself, turning it into a grand concentrated worship in which every man's occupation and profession, however secular, could become as fulfilling, as direct, and as conscious a way to God-realization as the cloistered path of an absorbed monk or nun. He showed that all religious paths were valid when sincerely followed, for they took a man gently towards God along the lines of his own natural bent. Indeed Swamiji's expansion of religion to embrace all of human life and his transformation of human life into a continual, joyful, and self-rewarding means of realizing one's own divine nature and the divinity of all men—of all beings and things—was one of the primary teachings of this period of his mission.

Considering that the main body of his message (as we know it) was given over a period of barely a year (he did not teach continually in 1896, but spent some weeks traveling in Europe), it was incredibly full and comprehensive. Perhaps this was inevitably so; for during this period he was giving the Western world, for all its uses and needs, its first meaningful and complete knowledge of Vedanta. It is true that for centuries India's philosophy had had an unnamed, if not untraceable, influence in the West. In recent times, moreover, a knowledge of Vedanta had come to America and England through the often crackling-dry scholarship of nineteenth-century Orientalists,

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

as well as through the more popular, though esoteric, teachings of Theosophy. In addition, something of Indian philosophy was mixed into the idealistic flights of Transcendentalism. But to the majority of Westerners at the close of the century, Vedanta was a new, very unaccustomed teaching, and since it was to the majority that Swamiji wished to speak, he gave much time to explaining it in detail. He held it up in full view, as it were, and revolved it again and again so that all its sides were clearly revealed and understood, so that its different lights could fall on the collective problems of contemporary man and its diverse aspects could fill diverse needs. In his inimitable way, he made this highly intricate, many-faceted, and abstruse philosophy course through his lectures and classes like some life-giving elixir—not vital merely, but vitality itself. Never before had this been done in the Western world.

Before leaving Swamiji's first visit to the West we should mention one aspect of his activity which, in respect to his world mission, was of much importance. Absorbed as he may have become in formulating and delivering a message to the Western people, he never forgot his Motherland or relegated her to the background of his thought. Not for a moment did his heartache over her misery or his longing to relieve the suffering of her people diminish in fervor; nor did he postpone his work of bringing about her regeneration. Throughout his first visit to the West his mind, as is clearly evidenced by his many letters to his brother monks and his householder disciples and friends, continually dwelt on India's problems and reviewed again and again the best means of solving them. As is well known, his idea, conceived at Cape Comorin at the end of 1892, was that India's hope lay in channeling "the tremendous power in the hands of the roving Sannyasins"⁸ into the dedicated service and elevation of her downtrodden masses. Thenceforth, his mind dealt with the ways and means of building up and organizing the Ramakrishna Order into a body of monks whose spiritual practice would lie not only in meditation and other traditional methods but in the dedicated service of man as God, and whose goal

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

would be not only their own liberation but also the welfare of the world. In the tradition of Hindu monasticism, the concept was revolutionary, and in practice, it involved changes and innovations that would have bearing on every aspect of the Order.

“In those early days we did not know the thoughts that were seething in Swamiji’s mind, day and night,” Sister Christine wrote in her memoirs. “ ‘The work! the work!’ he cried. ‘How to begin the work in India! The way, the means!’ The form it would take was evolved gradually. Certainly before he left America, the way, the means, and the method were clear in every detail.”⁹

Indeed, Swamiji’s letters written from America and England in which he set forth his ideas, his plans, and his hopes, in which he laid down rules, directed the beginnings of the work, exhorted, encouraged, scolded, and poured out so much energy that even the printed words seem vibrant, constitute almost as important a part of his Indian mission as do the lectures he gave in India upon his return to that country in 1897. They constitute, as well, an important part of his activity during his stay in the West. One cannot, in fact, form a true picture of Swamiji’s first visit in America without recognizing that, in addition to all else, it was a germination period of his Indian mission—a period during which that mission took shape in the white heat of his thought and began to glow with an immense nation-moving vitality.

Let us turn now to Swamiji’s second visit to the West, which we have reviewed in much detail in the pages of this book. The reader who has come this far, and who has read the transcripts of Swamiji’s California lectures as published in the *Complete Works* as well as the lectures of his first visit, will be aware that there was a pronounced difference both in message and in mood between his first visit and his second. The mood of Swamiji’s second visit has, I think, been so apparent throughout the present narrative that we need not dwell at length upon

it here. Suffice it to say that fiery as his California lectures often were—particularly those given in northern California—he could not by any stretch of the imagination have been called “the cyclonic monk.” While he spoke more than ever in the manner of a Prophet—uttering, one after the other, directly perceived truths, seldom pausing to provide philosophical reasons—he was, in some respects, less intent on delivering a message, less driven by the shortness of his days, less apt to cry in exasperation, as he had in 1895, “I have no time to give my manners a finish. I cannot find time enough to deliver my message.”¹⁰

His battle against the Western maligners of his country had long since been fought and won; he had held up to the world the spiritual depth and moral grandeur of India’s culture, religion, and philosophy; his teaching of Vedanta in all its aspects and implications had been given. Further, his “machine” for the regeneration of his Motherland had been set in motion, and his message to the Hindu people had been delivered. In short, by the time Swamiji left India in 1899, the substance of his mission on earth had been accomplished and the tremendous tension of his work had lessened.

It is true that for some months after leaving India Swamiji, physically and nervously exhausted, was filled with a sense of dissatisfaction and impatience with the progress of his Indian work. Yet as he rested at Ridgely Manor and, later, as he earned money in Los Angeles to defray the Math’s expenses and, in San Francisco, received heartening letters from his brothers at Belur, his mind gradually lifted into the total peace that was so natural to it. Indeed, so complete and transcendental did Swamiji’s serenity become toward the close of his California visit that those who loved him might have guessed that the gossamer-thin veil of Maya, without which work would have been impossible to him, had been rent and that his remaining days on earth were few.

We do not find, then, in California the same drive, the same sense of urgency that had characterized his earlier years.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Instead, there prevails a relaxed mood, sometimes playful, sometimes lyric. This is not to say that he was not at times deeply withdrawn and grave in California, or that he did not, as always, give his utmost to his mission; nor is it to say that during his first visit he was not at times playful and relaxed. It is to say only that the dominant moods of the two visits can be contrasted one with the other: the first heroic, the second idyllic. But one should add that if Swamiji's life was more quiet in California than it had been at an earlier time, it was not thereby less powerful or effective. His power seems to have been more that of a wide, deep river flowing smoothly and freely to a waiting sea, rather than that of a rushing torrent; but there was always a radiance of presence, a continuous shining of God-consciousness, such as constitutes the very essence of prophethood. Further, if his mood in California was not that of the warrior, his message, paradoxically, was more heroic, more uncompromising, and more demanding of man's best effort than ever before.

As far as we can know, Swamiji had not set forth from India the second time with a definite idea of giving a message to the West. Yet this does not mean that no message stirred within his mind. World Teacher that he was and his mission still in the outward swing of its cycle, he inevitably had a wealth of teaching still to give. It was not surprising, therefore, that in June of 1899, as his ship was piloted down the Hooghly River toward the Bay of Bengal, he spoke to Sister Nivedita of a "new gospel." And, as the reader will remember, Miss MacLeod wrote from Ridgely Manor to Mrs. Bull, "Swamiji is blessed and has his new message ready—that all there is in life is *character*.... [He said that] in one's greatest hour of need *one stands alone*. Buddhas and Christs do more harm than good—for mankind is trying to imitate them instead of developing its own character!"¹¹

One remembers also that as Miss MacLeod drove off from Ridgely Manor to hurry to California to the side of her brother, Swamiji called after her, "Get up some classes, and I will

come.”¹² He who had been born to teach others, who had come to earth to help mankind could not rest for long, could not but grow weary of the drawn-out house party at Ridgely Manor. He had a message, and that message had a compelling life of its own; it was bound to find full expression.

One cannot but think that Swamiji's new message was born from, or at least intensified by, what had been, on the whole, his disheartening experience in India. Even those of his countrymen who did not oppose him but flocked about him in genuine reverence and who nodded enthusiastic assent to his every word failed to respond to his message in deed. Rather, they continued to live and to think as they had been living and thinking for centuries past, following the old ways and traditions which, manifestly, led only deeper into degradation. There was no sign, and Swamiji was a past master at detecting signs, that his countrymen had heard him with more than half an ear.

“You have talked of reforms, of ideals, and all these things for the past hundred years,” he thundered in Madras; “but when it comes to practice, you are not to be found anywhere—till you have disgusted the whole world, and the very name of reform is a thing of ridicule! And what is the cause? . . . The only cause is that you are weak, weak, weak; your body is weak, your mind is weak, you have no faith in yourselves! Centuries and centuries, a thousand years of crushing tyranny of castes and kings and foreigners and your own people have taken out all your strength, my brethren. Your backbone is broken, you are like downtrodden worms. Who will give you strength? . . . The first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe—‘I am the Soul.’ . . . I wish that faith [of Nachiketa] would come to each of you; and every one of you would stand up a giant, a world-mover with a gigantic intellect—an infinite God in every respect. That is what I want you to become. This is the strength that you get from the Upanishads, this is the faith that you get from there.”¹³

And in Calcutta he had taunted the Brahmins, proud in

their rigid, formal orthodoxy: "You are Vedantists, you are very orthodox, are you not? You are great Hindus, and very orthodox. Ay, what I want to do is to make you more orthodox. The more orthodox you are, the more sensible; and the more you think of modern orthodoxy, the more foolish you are. Go back to your old orthodoxy, for in those days every sound that came from these books, every pulsation, was out of a strong, steady, and sincere heart; every note was true. . . . Go back, go back to the old days, when there was strength and vitality. Be strong once more, drink deep of this fountain of yore, and that is the only condition of life in India."¹⁴

But at the time nothing much came of Swamiji's fiery exhortations to his countrymen; as pointed out in an earlier chapter, there was not the nationwide response that he had hoped for; there were no inward stirrings of life in the heart of the country, no efforts toward self-regeneration. Swamiji was like one who had brought a large and nourishing feast to a starving man and found him too weak, too debilitated to eat. There can be little doubt that as he attempted to rouse his all-but-unrousable Motherland he soon came to the conclusion—by the beginning, at least, of 1899—that only men and women who were strong in the first place could accept the undiluted, leonine religion of the Upanishads. One must first build up men and women of strength on every level of human activity and in every social stratum and condition of life. One must infuse India's oldest, highest, and broadest truths back into the very blood of the people.

"I am born to proclaim to them that fearless message—'Arise! Awake!'" he declared, and urged his disciples: "Be you my helpers in this work. Go over from village to village, from one portion of the country to another, and preach this message of fearlessness to all, from the Brahmana to the Chandala. Tell each and all that infinite power resides within them, that they are sharers of immortal Bliss. Thus rouse up the Rajas within them—make them fit for the struggle for existence, and then speak to them about salvation. First make

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

people of the country stand on their feet by rousing their inner power, first let them learn to have good food and clothes and plenty of enjoyment.... Laziness, meanness and hypocrisy have covered the whole length and breadth of the country. ...Does it not bring tears to the eyes? Madras, Bombay, Punjab, Bengal—whichever way I look, I see no signs of life.”¹⁵

It did not appear that the dualistic teachings that the Hindu people had been following for centuries had been producing men ready to live in accordance with the strong, bracing truths of Advaita Vedanta or that they had been of much benefit to the country as a whole. On the contrary: “You... are made lunatics by these evil teachings,” Swamiji cried in Lahore. “I have seen, all the world over, the bad effects of these weak teachings of humility destroying the human race. Our children are brought up in this way, and is it a wonder that they become semi-lunatics?”¹⁶ Everything associated with that which was weakening Swamiji repudiated. “In every district and village... you will find only the sound of the Khol and Kartal!... Hearing from boyhood the sound of these effeminate forms of music and listening to the Kirtan [devotional singing], the country is well-nigh converted into a country of women. What more degradation can you expect?... Through the thunder-roll of the dignified Vedic hymns, life is to be brought back into the country. In everything the austere spirit of heroic manhood is to be revived.”¹⁷

Everywhere the great thunderclap of Advaita should resound. The idea that each person should develop religiously along his or her “own line of least resistance” (generally the line of supplication and ritualism), moving gradually from “lower truth to higher truth”—an idea that Swamiji had long held and had expressed in a *Prabuddha Bharata* interview in December of 1898—was giving way to the idea, which he had also long held, that everyone should start with the highest of truths, “I am the Self, the Omniscient One,” making this bedrock fact the foundation of his total mental outlook. Three short excerpts from Sister Nivedita’s letters as first published in

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Prabuddha Bharata of 1935 and later and less fully in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* stand as evidence of the change in emphasis that Swamiji's ideas had undergone in this respect during his stay in India. (In quoting these excerpts, I have taken them from *Prabuddha Bharata* and have added in brackets a heretofore unpublished sentence from Nivedita's original letters.)

On the evening of March 11 of 1899 Sister Nivedita had gone to the Belur Math to interview Swamiji for *Prabuddha Bharata*. "We got there at 8 o'clock," she wrote to Miss MacLeod the following day. "Swami had been sitting beside the fire under the tree, but I did not get off my rug on the boat's roof, and he came to me there, for I felt that it was a little late for a lady to visit Monks." ("Time and place were alike delightful," she wrote in the published interview itself. "Overhead the stars, and around—the rolling Ganges; and on one side stood the dimly lighted building, with its background of palms and lofty shade-trees.") "When I had interviewed him," she continued in her letter, "he said, 'I say, Margot, I have been thinking for days about that line of least resistance, and it is a base fallacy. It is a comparative thing. As for me, I am never going to think of it again. The history of the world is the history of a few earnest men, and when one man is earnest the world must just come to his feet. I am *not* going to water down my ideals, I am going to dictate terms.' ["This gave me my freedom too," Sister Nivedita continued apropos of her girls' school; "and it is really to be a monastic order and not a series of concessions to the feeble-hearted."] Amongst other things Swami said," she went on, " 'We have not seen Humanity yet, and when that era dawns there will be no line of least resistance, for everyone will be free to do good.' And again, 'My mission is not Ramakrishna's nor Vedanta's nor anything but simply to bring manhood to my people.' "''¹⁸

But as Swamiji interpreted the life of Sri Ramakrishna, man-making was its greatest significance. In a letter of May 8, 1899, Sister Nivedita quoted him as saying: "It was not the

words of Sri Ramakrishna but the life he lived that [is] wanted, and that is yet to be written. After all, this world is a series of pictures, and man-making is the great interest running through. We were all watching the making of men, and that alone. Sri Ramakrishna was always weeding out and rejecting the old, he always chose the young for his disciples.”¹⁹

A week earlier Sister Nivedita had written to Miss MacLeod of Swamiji's mood as he had revealed it to her: “His days were drawing to an end; but even if they were not, he was going to give up compromise. He would go to the Himalayas, and live there in meditation. He would go out into the world and preach *smashing* truths. It had been good for a while to go amongst men and tell them that they were in their right place, and so on. But he could do that no longer. Let them give up, give up, give up. Then he said very quietly, ‘You won’t understand this now, Margot; but when you get further on you will.’ ”²⁰

One might ask why Swamiji did not lecture in India more than he did, why he did not go about from place to place dictating terms, preaching the divinity of man, instilling within the people the basic faith in themselves which, he was convinced, could alone restore their lost manhood, strength, and identity. His disciple Saratchandra Chakravarty once asked a similar question: “How is it, Swamiji, that you do not lecture in this country? You have stirred Europe and America with your lectures, but coming back here you have kept silence.”

“In this country,” Swamiji replied, “the ground should be prepared first; and then if the seed is sown, the plant will come out best. The ground in the West, in Europe and America, is very fertile and fit for sowing seeds. There, they have reached the climax of Bhoga (enjoyment). . . . In this country you have not either Bhoga or Yoga (renunciation). When one is satiated with Bhoga, then it is that one will listen to and understand the teachings on Yoga. What good will lectures do in a country like India which has become the birthplace of disease, sorrow and affliction, and where men are emaciated through starvation, and weak in mind? . . . First of all, make the soil ready,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and thousands of Vivekanandas will in time be born into this world to deliver lectures on religion. You needn't worry yourself about that!"²¹

As I mentioned earlier, as far as we can know, Swamiji did not come to the West the second time with the intention of teaching; but for whatever reason he came, he came with a conviction in his mind and heart—a "new gospel," as he called it, dynamic with his sense of its universal urgency and ready for full and vigorous expression.

Swamiji's "new gospel" was, of course, not new in the sense that he had never taught it before. The Upanishadic *mahavakya* "Thou art That!" had rung like an insistent refrain through his New York and London lectures. "I do not believe at all that Monistic ideas preached to the world would produce immorality and weakness," he had said in London. "On the contrary, I have reason to believe that it is the only remedy there is. If this be the truth, why let people drink ditch water when the stream of life is flowing by? If this be the truth, that they are all pure, why not at this moment teach it to the whole world? Why not teach it with the voice of thunder to every man that is born, to saints and sinners, men, women and children, to the man on the throne and to the man sweeping the streets? . . . We must teach them, we must help them to rouse up their infinite nature. This is what I feel to be absolutely necessary all over the world. . . . Let the world resound with this idea and let superstition vanish. Tell it to men who are weak and persist in telling it. You are the Pure One. . . ." ²²

One could multiply such quotations. Indeed, one cannot easily turn the pages of *Jnana Yoga* without finding that during his first visit to the West Swamiji had laid great stress on Advaita Vedanta. Yet when one considers his teachings in New York and London as a whole, taking into account his classes as well as his many public lectures, one finds (and many have found) that his prevailing message was that there are diverse ways for man to realize and manifest his potential divinity, that life itself is the "struggle towards the great ideal, towards

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

perfection," and that, as each works out his own vision of this universe, according to his own ideas, all in the long run will come to truth.

But the long run was long indeed, and in 1899 Swamiji was markedly impatient on behalf of his love—humanity. The slow, gradual, long-tried way had not been enough to set men free, nor had it been enough to make the kind of men and women, East or West, who could meet the unprecedented tumults and challenges of the coming age. In his storming of the citadel Swamiji was by no means going against the spirit of his Master. "I don't like the idea of '*banat banat ban jai*—slowly and gradually it will come about,' " Sri Ramakrishna had said. "I want: 'Be up and doing now.' No '*banat banat*,' but 'today! this very moment!'—a dacoitlike attitude."²³

The slow, safe way was not for modern man; it was not his way in science and technology; it *must not* be his way in religion. During his second visit to the West Swamiji underscored with straight and bold strokes the "smashing truth" that man is the Pure One *here and now*; that he is this moment wholly divine, that he is replete, even now, with the qualities of divinity, and that wherever he stands, whatever he is doing, he can assert this truth. "Fill the mind with it day and night," he cried in "The Soul and God": " 'I am It. I am the Lord of the universe. Never was there any delusion.' Meditate upon it with all the strength of the mind till you actually see these walls, houses, everything, melt away—until body, everything, vanishes. 'I will stand alone. I am the One.' Struggle on!"²⁴ There was no question here of the long run, of waiting to realize this ever-shining, self-evident fact at some distant date. If one is Brahman, then one cannot at any time be less than Brahman, nor can one fail to manifest one's divinity continually and fully, just as eternal light cannot at any time fail to shine. It was no doubt to this teaching, which resounded throughout his California lectures, reaching a climax of expression and power in San Francisco, that Swamiji referred when he said he had given his "highest teaching" in California.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Inevitably, this "new gospel" was reflected in many aspects of his message and as inevitably altered their appearance, highlighting some, throwing others into shadow. One effect of its pervasive presence can be clearly seen in the kind of subjects Swamiji chose. In the Appendix of this book the reader will find a complete list of his California lectures, a glance at which will show that in northern California, as in southern California, he gave a proportionately large number of lectures on the theory and practice of raja yoga. In addition, or, rather, in correlation, peals of monistic thunder rolled over his northern California audiences almost daily. Whereas in his first visit he had given equal attention to all four primary paths or yogas and had stressed the equal validity of each, he now emphasized that the one essential attitude for all people was the affirmation of their substantive divinity—not as a background philosophy or theory but as a living, immediately relevant fact. He taught, that is, the bold, positive assertions of jnana yoga. And in order that man could live up to them and verify them through experience, he taught the practice of raja yoga as the most effective method. The first (jnana yoga) gave significance and direction to the latter; the latter (raja yoga) gave power and speed to the first.

One should not conclude from this, however, that he neglected bhakti or karma yoga, the paths, respectively, of devotion and selfless action. In Los Angeles one of his most wonderful lectures, "Work and Its Secret," was on the subject of karma yoga, and his lectures in the series on "Divine Love" in San Francisco were among the most beautiful he ever gave on that subject. Yet in the single lecture that he devoted to karma yoga he emphasized the need for spiritual strength. "We require super-divine power," he cried. "Super-human power is not strong enough. Super-divine strength is the only way, the one way out."²⁵ Even in his series on devotion Swamiji stressed the importance of asserting the self-luminous Atman. "My ambition," he said in "Formal Worship," "is to talk to men and women, not to sheep, By men and women, I mean individuals.

...Remember this individualism at any cost! Think wrong if you will; no matter whether you get truth or not. The whole point is to discipline the mind.... All must struggle to be individuals—strong, standing on your own feet, thinking your own thoughts, realizing your own Self.”²⁶

Another difference in Swamiji’s choice of subjects lay in his many talks in California on the great Teachers (or Messengers) of the world—a subject to which he had not earlier devoted a full lecture. His bold effort to wean (or wrench) mankind from a false and weakening dependence on Saviors and Prophets was, of course, directly connected with his uncompromising demand that each individual assert his own divinity here and now. One cannot but think that this aspect of his new message motivated his Great Teacher talks. That he had been thinking of the debilitating effect of man’s abject dependence upon World Savio^r shortly before coming to the West is clear from his essay written in Bengali for the *Udbodhan* of February 1899, “Knowledge: Its Source and Acquirement.”

“If it is finally settled,” he there wrote (I quote from the translation as given in the *Complete Works*), “that the path of human welfare is forever chalked out by these omniscient men, society naturally fears its own destruction if the least deviation be made from the boundary line of the path, and so it tries to compel all men through rigid laws and threats of punishment to follow that path with unconditional obedience. If society succeeds in imposing such obedience to itself by confining all men within the narrow groove of these paths, then the destiny of mankind becomes no better than that of a machine.... In course of time, for want of proper use, all activity is given up, all originality is lost, a sort of Tamasika dreamy lifelessness hovers over the whole nation, and headlong it goes down and down. The death of such a nation is not far to seek.... Each [path pointed out by the great ones of the earth] has its place in the development of the sum total of knowledge; and we must learn to estimate them according to their respective merits. But, perhaps, being carried away by their over-zealous

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and blind devotion to their Masters, the successors and followers of these great ones sacrifice truth before the altar of devotion and worship to them, and misrepresent the true meaning of the purpose of those great lives by insisting on personal worship, that is, they kill the principle for the person.”²⁷

In California this same theme wove through many of Swamiji’s lectures: “These great Teachers are the living Gods on this earth,” he said in Pasadena. “Whom else should we worship?”²⁸ But in the same lecture (“The Great Teachers of the World”) he cried, “There is a tendency in us to revert to old ideas in religion. Let us think something new, even if it be wrong. It is better to do that... Do something! Think some thought!... Struggle Godward! Light must come!”²⁹

Those had been among Swamiji’s last words to the people of southern California. In San Francisco he urged man forward with words even more forceful: “I fall down and worship [the Messengers of God]; I take the dust of their feet. But they are dead, dead as doornails! and we are alive. We must go ahead! ... Be not an imitation of Jesus, but be Jesus! You are quite as great as Jesus, Buddha, or anybody else.”³⁰

Throughout Swamiji’s lectures in California several themes relating to his call for spiritual self-reliance resounded repeatedly and with increasing emphasis. It was as though he had chosen from the abundantly faceted message of his first visit the essential passages that he wished to impress deeply upon the mind of the world. Over and over, for instance, he thundered, “Help thyself!” “It is a tremendous error to feel helpless. Do not seek help from anyone. We are our own help. If we cannot help ourselves, there is none to help us.”³¹

Again, goading the individual on to develop his own character, think his own thoughts, rise to the infinite heights of his own greatness, he repeatedly warned against the imprisoning and weakening doctrines, beliefs, and myths of authoritarian religions. He did not hesitate to cry: “Exit praying and laying flowers in the temples!” “If you take my advice, you will never

enter any church. Come out and go and wash off. Wash yourself again and again until you are cleansed of all the superstitions that have clung to you through the ages.”³²

Or expecting the best of man, looking upon him as God Himself, he spoke much more often and with much greater emphasis than he had in earlier years of the “divine play” of life. “Play!” he cried in his lectures. “God Almighty plays. That is all. . . . You are the almighty God playing.”³³ Seldom during this last period of his mission did he speak of life as a “moral gymnasium.” Indeed at Camp Taylor he had categorically repudiated Miss Bell’s idea of the world as “an old schoolhouse.” We are “tumbling,” he told her, for the sheer joy of it. This was anything but a doctrine of escape: it was precisely the opposite. The fearless worship of the Terrible was essential to the awareness of divine joy, and this theme, too, received from Swamiji corresponding emphasis. “Who creates all evil?” he asked, and answered, “God. There is no other way out. . . . How can such a God be worshipped? . . . Turn around first of all and face the terrible. Tear aside the mask and find the same God. . . . There is none else.”³⁴

These were some of the grand and bold themes to which Swamiji returned again and again in California. Never before had he placed them in such high relief or taught them with such unmistakable emphasis, leaving no doubt that these were the truths he wanted all men to take deeply to heart. “The people shall learn the truth,” he said during his lecture on Buddha in San Francisco. “Some are afraid that if the full truth is given to all, it will hurt them. They should not be given the unqualified truth—so they say. But the world is not much better off by compromising truth. What worse can it be than it is already? Bring truth out! If it is real, it will do good.”³⁵ One remembers his talk to the monks at Belur Math a month or so before he set sail for the West: “Every man is capable of receiving knowledge if it is imparted in his own language. . . . You must speak out the truth without any fear that it will perturb the weak. Truth is always truth. . . . Know ye for certain that

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

this attempt at compromise proceeds from arrant downright cowardice.... Therefore repeatedly I say to you, be bold to speak out your convictions." And Swamiji himself had no hesitation whatsoever in bringing out the "*smashing* truths" that in 1899 he had told Sister Nivedita he was going thenceforth to teach.

In considering the general differences between Swamiji's first and second visits to the West, it seems clear that not only had his message changed in its emphasis, but his conception of the Western Vedanta movement had in some respects changed as well. At no time, it is true, did he draw up a set of rules or write a detailed constitution for the continuance of his Western work; characteristically, he wanted it to take shape freely and in accordance with the customs and nature of its environment. Yet he did have some definite ideas in regard to the role Vedanta would play in the Western world and the general form it would take; and it was these ideas, I believe, that underwent a change.

As is well known, Swamiji often made it clear during his first visit to the West that he did not want to establish anything like a Vedantic religious organization or church. In the course of a newspaper interview in London in 1895, for instance, he was asked if he represented any sect or was connected with any sect or society. "None whatever!" he replied, and continued, "...Whatever in my teaching may appeal to the highest intelligence and be accepted by thinking men, the adoption of that will be my reward. All religions have for their object the teaching either of devotion, knowledge or Yoga, in a concrete form. Now, the philosophy of Vedanta is the abstract science which embraces all these methods, and this it is that I teach, leaving each one to apply it to his own concrete form...." "Then you do not propose to form any society, Swami?" the interviewer asked. "None," Swamiji replied; "no society whatever."³⁶

The following year, when he had completed his work in

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

America and did not intend to return, he was interviewed in London by another newspaperman, who remarked, "I gather that you did not found anything like a church or new religion in America." "That is true," Swamiji replied. "It is contrary to our principles to multiply organisations, since in all conscience, there are enough of them."³⁷ During the course of another interview he was asked if he had left disciples in each of the American cities he had visited. "Yes," he said, "disciples, but not organisations. That is no part of my work."³⁸

As we know, Swamiji did, in fact, found a society in New York in November of 1894—the same society of which Swami Abhedananda was in charge in 1900. But in view of the above quotations, it would seem clear that in 1895 Swamiji did not consider this Society to be anything like a church. And, to be sure, it was not. At its beginning, one of the purposes for its existence was to handle his financial affairs, which tended otherwise to get in a muddle. Another purpose was to manage the details of his work itself—his lectures and classes and so on. Later, in 1896, two overlapping committees were formed within the Society to take care of all practical matters, including the printing and distribution of his pamphlets and books. The Society was also designed to carry on his work in his absence. But the important thing to notice here is that in its early years this New York Vedanta Society had no members: it had a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer and the workers on its two committees, but beyond these functionaries, there were no members at all. This was not because people did not want to join; it was simply because there was no membership roll. There was nothing to become a member of.

When Swamiji left America in 1896, this type of unorganized, memberless organization was in accord with the way he then felt his work should develop. "My idea is for autonomic, independent groups in different places," he had written to Mrs. Bull in December of 1895. "Let them work on their own account and do the best they can. As for myself, I do not want to entangle myself in any organisation."³⁹ Originally, he had

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

hoped that his American disciples would carry on his work in America, spreading his message. To this end (at least in part) he had trained a group of students at Thousand Island Park. "I have got a few hundred followers," he wrote from there, "I shall make several Sannyasins and then I go to India, leaving the work to them."⁴⁰ And to his disciples he said, "This message must be preached by Indians in India, and by Americans in America."⁴¹ At Thousand Islands he gave, as mentioned earlier, final monastic vows to a man and a woman, who thereby became, respectively, Swami Kripananda and Swami Abhayananda. He authorized them to teach, blessed them, and sent them forth. But in keeping with his impassioned respect for individual freedom, he laid down no rules as to what they should teach or how they should teach it. Indeed, in a letter that he wrote at the end of 1895 to Swami Abhayananda (not to Alasinga, as has been sometimes said), he made his wishes in regard to both the nature of the New York Vedanta Society and work of his disciples very clear. "We have no organization," he wrote, "nor want to build any. Each one is quite independent to teach, quite free to preach whatever he or she likes. If you have the spirit within you, you will never fail to attract others. The Theosophists' methods can never be ours, for the very simple reason that they are an organized sect, we are not. Individuality is my motto," he continued, "I have no ambition beyond training individuals up."⁴² And in a letter to Swami Kripananda, Mrs. Bull wrote in July of 1896, "Vivekananda asks obedience of his students, only to those ideals they voluntarily assume, not to his teachings, if I understand him."⁴³

But as it happened, neither Swami Kripananda nor Swami Abhayananda was able to attract a substantial following, and it was not long before it became clear to Swamiji that his American work, as well as his Indian work, would have to be carried on by Indians. (There is small doubt that he was disappointed by this. One indication appears in a letter he wrote to his disciple Ellen Waldo in October of 1896, when the New York Vedanta Society was temporarily, but fretfully,

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

without a lecturer and a young Hindu had been suggested. "Why do you not begin to teach?" he asked Miss Waldo. "... *I will be thousand times more pleased to see one of you start than any number of Hindus securing success in America—even one of my brethren. 'Man wants Victory from everywhere, but defeat from his own children.'*... Make a blaze! Make a blaze!")⁴⁴ But even though Swamiji never quite gave up hope that his American disciples would make a blaze, he had begun at the end of 1895 to send to the Math for swamis.

His overall plan for his work, however, remained the same. He still hoped, that is, to see it carried on with a minimum of organization. In the fall of 1896, after he had left America, a prospectus was printed by his American friends outlining a plan for work in accordance with "the wishes of the Swami Vivekananda for cooperative work without an organization." The idea behind this (and it met with Swamiji's approval) was that his friends in Boston (notably Mrs. Bull) and the officers of the New York Society should join forces and work together. The plan involved renting a four-room flat in New York to serve "as a permanent centre for the presentation of the Vedanta Philosophy." Two of the rooms were to be devoted to the use of Swami Saradananda and an assistant; the other two rooms were to serve as a reading room and library. There were to be fortnightly meetings for reading and discussion and, on alternate weeks, there were to be lectures by "scholars of standing," including, of course, Swami Saradananda. It was expected that money for rent would come from sympathizers, from admissions to the lectures, and from the sale of Swamiji's books.⁴⁵ There was still no membership roll.

Through the agency of a loosely organized center of this sort people could read and hear about the philosophy of Vedanta and could then apply it in their lives and adapt it to the religious forms of their choice. This is the way Swamiji wanted his work to proceed. In addition, of course, he wanted his brother monks to make and train disciples, including monastic disciples. ("If it pleases the Lord," he wrote from America

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in March of 1896, "yellow-garbed Sannyasins will be common here and in England.")⁴⁶ Further, he would have liked ashramas or retreats to develop. "Here in America," he wrote regretfully in 1896, "there are no Ashramas. Would there was one! How would I like it and what an amount of good it would do to this country!"⁴⁷ But although Swamiji clearly recognized the practicality of having a center where Vedanta would be taught and from which it would spread, he remained throughout his first visit to the West opposed both to organization and to the founding of anything like a church.

(It is true that in London, for a day or two at least, Swamiji considered that it was, as he said, "absolutely necessary to form some ritual and have a Church." "We must fix on some ritual as fast as we can," he wrote with much enthusiasm to Mr. Sturdy. "...kindly bring the Upanishads. We will fix something grand, from birth to death of a man. A mere loose system of philosophy gets no hold on mankind."⁴⁸ But within a day or two he thought better of this idea, and we hear no more about it.)

Many years later Swami Abhedananda commented upon Swamiji's dislike of organization. In March of 1915, during the course of a talk to the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, he said: "I know that when Swami Vivekananda started the work he did not believe in organization. In fact, when he invited me to go to London and gave me the charge of his work, he did not organize. And where is the London Society today? It has gone to pieces. Then he started a Society in New York. He did not organize; in fact, he could not organize. He did not put his force in that line at all. He said that wherever there is organization, that is the seed of discord and inharmony."⁴⁹

Perhaps there were other reasons as well for Swamiji's early refusal to organize. For instance, he wanted Vedanta to remain fluid. It was not one religion among many, but was, as he so often said, "the philosophy which can serve as a basis to every possible religion in the world." It is the eternal thread on which all religions and all sects are strung. He did not want to identify

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

it with any particular form, any particular person, any particular group of people. Further, the last thing he wanted was to see it slowly strangled in a web of beliefs, myths, rituals, traditions, and so on, such as seems invariably to be woven around enchurched ideals.

But although Swamiji had not wanted organization, organization had come. For financial and legal reasons, Swami Abhedananda, who had come to America in 1897, found it essential to incorporate the New York Vedanta Society under the laws of the State of New York. This he did in October of 1898 when Swamiji was in India. Then, in March of 1900, when Swamiji was in San Francisco, a membership roll was opened by the trustees. In April of 1900 Swami Abhedananda amended the bylaws, giving the Swami in charge of the Society a necessary control over its activities. Thus, even before Swamiji left California, the New York Vedanta Society had become a full-fledged religious organization; one might even say it had become a church.

By this time, however, Swamiji seems to have changed his views to an appreciable degree in regard to both organization as such and the establishment of a church. In connection with the former, one recalls a passage in one of the lectures he gave in southern California in January of 1900. "In England or America, if you want to preach religion," he said, "you will have to work through political methods—make organizations, societies, with voting, balloting, a president and so on, because that is the language, the method of the Western race."⁵⁰ As we have seen, he started a Vedanta society in southern California and, in April of 1900, one in San Francisco. The southern California society soon died out, but, as we of course know, the San Francisco Society thrived. Although the latter was not to be legally incorporated for many years, it began, as we have also seen, with a body of members whom Swamiji himself called Vedantins. Nor did he object to the organizational developments in New York. "The only thing I see," he wrote to Miss MacLeod in this connection, "is that in every country

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

we have to follow its own method.”⁵¹ He suggested in this letter of April 10, 1900, that the members and sympathizers of the Society be asked what they wanted in respect to organization. Whatever they wanted, that should be done.

As for establishing a church, during his second visit to the West Swamiji was unquestionably preaching Vedanta not only as a philosophy “which can serve as a basis to every possible religion in the world” but also, and it would seem primarily, as a religion *in itself* which people could follow exclusively and with which they could become identified. Nor did Swamiji hesitate to consider publicly the possibility of Vedanta becoming the religion of the future. In his lecture “Is Vedanta the Future Religion?” he laid down the conditions under which it could become so.

While Swamiji had by no means discarded his former views regarding the dangers of organization, he now saw, it would seem, its advantages as well, indeed its inevitability. He saw too, perhaps, that if Vedanta were to become the “man-making religion” he so strongly desired, it not only must serve to unify and revivify other religions but must become a religion in itself, holding its own principles inviolate, protecting them from compromise, dilution, distortion, and offering them in their pure form to whoever would seek them. Indeed, as was said in the preceding chapter, it was necessary to his mission that Swamiji should establish a living vessel in which the spiritual seeds he had so liberally sown would take root and flourish. And such a living vessel is, precisely, a church.

But is not a church almost bound to develop its own ceremonies, temples, shrines, holy places and persons, sacred traditions, legends, myths, scriptures, art forms—all those enchanting accompaniments of religion that the human heart craves but which almost invariably encroach upon the central truth, choking it, swamping it, and eventually displacing it, becoming themselves the all-important center? Swamiji was, of course, keenly aware of this danger. Was this not why he said in “Is Vedanta the Future Religion?” “There is a chance

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

of Vedanta becoming the religion of your country because of democracy. But it can become so only if you can and do clearly understand it, if you become real men and women, not people with vague ideas and superstitions in your brains, and if you want to be truly spiritual, since Vedanta is concerned only with spirituality." In this same lecture he again and again pounded upon the conditions one must fill to be a Vedantin: "No book, no person, no personal God. All these must go. . . . Worship everything as God—every form is His temple. All else is delusion. Always look within, never without. Such is the God that Vedanta preaches, and such is His worship."⁵²

Did this mean that Swamiji wanted no temples, no altars, no rituals, no dualistic practices whatsoever in the Vedanta churches (or societies) in the West? This is a question that deserves, I believe, to be deeply considered by those who are carrying on Swamiji's work today, establishing its patterns, creating its ambience. One can venture to say here, however, that while Swamiji did not himself introduce any of these things in the West, he did not specifically ban them, as he did to his heart's delight at Mayavati. "Many people think the ceremonial etc. help them in realising religion. I have no objection," he wrote to Mary Hale in a letter dated June 17, 1900. "Religion is that which does not depend upon books or teachers or prophets or saviours, and that which does not make us dependent in this or in any other lives upon others. In this sense Advaitism of the Upanishads is the only religion. But saviours, books, prophets, ceremonials, etc., have their places. They may help many, as Kali worship helps me in my *secular work*. They are welcome."⁵³

Nevertheless, it would seem eminently clear that in the Vedanta societies that he founded in the West Swamiji very much wanted all dualistic practices and beliefs to be kept to a minimum, subordinate to the grand truths of his California ministry. Yes, he was well aware, and sometimes said, that the great majority of people could not immediately follow a monistic religion, making it real and effective in their lives;

but he also was certain that many could and must. Nor, to his mind, was the possibility altogether remote that Vedanta in its dazzlingly pure form could become the future religion. To repeat his closing words in his great lecture "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?"—a lecture that can well serve as his manifesto to Western Vedantins: "The hour will come when great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and shall make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the spirit by the spirit."⁶⁴ That was Swamiji's vision, and the vision of a Swami Vivekananda can surely become the reality of a future time.

10

The Southern Pacific's *Overland Limited*, made up largely of Pullman Palace Cars, elegant with red plush and walnut paneling and equipped with an opulent diner, was one of the most deluxe trains of the era. It was also one of the fastest. But even so, its run between San Francisco and Chicago—its double-headed laboring over the high Sierra, its clattering across the endless sage deserts of Nevada and Utah, through the wheat fields of south Wyoming and Nebraska and so on through Iowa and Illinois—took three full days and nights of what Swamiji, well experienced in American train travel of the 1890s, had known would be a "bone-breaking journey." One can be almost certain that when the *Overland Limited* arrived in Chicago on the morning of Saturday, June 2, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Almost nothing is known at present of Swamiji's stay in Chicago, except that it could not have lasted for more than four days, and was perhaps even shorter. According to an account of his life in America by Miss Ellen Waldo, he also made a visit to Detroit at this time, which would have cut his stay in Chicago to two or, at the most, three days.¹ But however that may be, Swamiji no doubt had time in Chicago to see many of his old friends, and no doubt he once again spent

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

quiet hours in the Walton Place flat, where Mary Hale and the two McKindley sisters were still living. Since his visit to Chicago six months earlier, there had been another change in the Hale family: Mr. George Hale had died in early February, and Mrs. Hale was now living in the same apartment building at 10 Aster Street as the Clarence Woolleys, possibly in the same apartment.

The only detail we have of Swamiji's Chicago visit is a brief episode, which is recounted in *Vivekananda: A Biography* by Swami Nikhilananda and which the Swami learned, he told me, from Miss MacLeod. "On the morning of his departure," Swami Nikhilananda writes, "Mary came to the Swami's room and found him sad. His bed appeared to have been untouched, and on being asked the reason, he confessed that he had spent the whole night without sleep. 'Oh,' he said, almost in a whisper, 'it is so difficult to break human bonds!'"²

As Swamiji knew, this was the last time he was to see the family he loved above all others of his Western friends. "You have been always the sweetest notes in my jarring and clashing life,"³ he had written to Mary from San Francisco. Saying now his last farewell, he went on to New York, where (whether he stopped over in Detroit or not) he arrived on the hot summer day of Thursday, June 7.

Changes had taken place in the New York Vedanta Society since Swamiji had last been on the East Coast. The opening of a membership roll had at once increased the Society's funds, thereby making possible the rental of an entire house for its headquarters. In April or early May the Society had accordingly moved from its rooms at 146 East Fifty-fifth Street to a modest, four-story house at 102 East Fifty-eighth Street, just off Park Avenue (a little more than two blocks east of Fifth Avenue). The neighborhood was very much more fashionable than those in which Swamiji had lived and worked during his first visit to America, and the house less dreary. As was usual in New York houses of that period, the ground floor was given

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

over to a kitchen and a dining room; the second, or parlor, floor had ample space for reading room and library, classroom and reception room, or drawing room. "On the floor above the drawing room," to quote from a Bengali biography of Swami Abhedananda, "was the sitting room of the Swamis. There was only one bed in the Vedanta Society house, and they gave it to Swami Vivekananda. Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda slept on the floor."⁴ (Prior to the rental of the house, Swami Abhedananda had lived in a poor rooming house, and Swami Turiyananda, as mentioned earlier, had been the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler in Montclair, New Jersey, from which, when necessary, he had traveled the twenty miles to New York. On the fourth floor of the Vedanta Society's house there was, no doubt, a sparsely furnished bedroom or two, where the housekeeper (a Mrs. Crane at this particular time) and hardy guests could sleep.

(It should be mentioned here, lest confusion arise, that one of Swamiji's first published letters from New York—dated June 23, 1900—bears the return address "146 E. 55th St."—the address of the rooms the Society had earlier occupied. I have not seen Swamiji's original letter, but would hazard the guess that it was written on leftover stationery printed with the old address. Other sources leave no doubt that the Society had moved into its new quarters well before June and that Swamiji, with the exception of a short visit to Detroit, lived in the Fifty-eighth Street house throughout his stay in New York.)

The furnishings and decor of the house were not, perhaps, on the ample or spruce side. Indeed, as one can infer from a report written in the fall of the following year, the interior was in a sorry state. "[Swami Abhedananda] returned to New York [from California] at the beginning of October [1901]," this report reads, "and had the pleasure of finding the Society house entirely renovated and made for the first time a really suitable home for the work. All the rented furniture had been removed, the walls rehung, the floors recarpeted, and the

classroom where the daily meditation is held, converted into a sort of chapel."⁵

But shabbily and meagerly furnished as the house may have been in 1900, the rental of it was a milepost in the Vedanta Society's history. Swamiji was delighted. At a reception the Society was to accord him a few days after his arrival he "expressed his satisfaction at being able to live in the Vedanta Society's own house. And he said joyfully, 'I have knocked at the door of New York three times: it never opened. But now I am very happy to see that the Society has a house of its own.'"⁶ (Actually, the Society did not have a house of its own; it had a rented house. Still, a rented house in a good neighborhood was a big step above a rented flat in a poor one.)

Other changes had taken place in the New York Society while Swamiji had been in California. The differences between Swami Abhedananda on the one hand and the Leggetts, Miss MacLeod, and Mrs. Bull on the other had been resolved or, at least, dissolved. "These things get complicated sometimes, in spite of ourselves," Swamiji had written soothingly to Miss MacLeod from Alameda, after receiving a number of agitated letters. "Let them take their shape."⁷ And, to be sure, things had of themselves taken shape. Mr. Leggett had resigned from the presidentship; one of Swami Abhedananda's disciples, Dr. Herschell C. Parker, a professor at Columbia University, had been unanimously elected president by the newly enrolled membership, the bylaws had been changed, giving the Swami-in-charge some measure of control over the Society's activities, and Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, Miss MacLeod, and Mrs. Bull had all gone off to Europe. Peace reigned, and by June the New York Vedanta Society was established in the pattern it was to follow for many years thereafter.

Some of Swamiji's old friends and disciples who had been close to him in 1895 and '96 were there to greet him; others were missing. Josiah J. Goodwin, whose passage through Swamiji's mission coincided almost exactly with the deliverance in New York, London, and India of his main message to

the world, had died in 1898. Swami Kripananda (Leon Landsberg), to whom Swamiji had given sannyasa at Thousand Island Park in 1895, had, as we have seen, defected in 1898, if not earlier. Swami Abhayananda, to whom Swamiji had also given sannyasa, had, for reasons of her own, also turned against him. Others, however, had been faithful. Miss S. Ellen Waldo, one of his brahmacharini disciples, who had been at Thousand Island Park and was his housekeeper and secretary in 1896, was still connected with the New York Society; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Goodyear, who—as is not generally known—had also been among the group at Thousand Island Park, were still devoted, as was Miss Mary Phillips, one of Swamiji's earliest supporters in New York. Others, certainly, had remained close to him. But the hot days of summer having descended upon the city, it is hard to say who among his many New York friends and disciples were in town. Miss Emma Thursby, Miss Sarah Farmer, Dr. and Mrs. Guernsey, for instance, may or may not have been. On the other hand, many new people—students of Swami Saradananda and Swami Abhedananda, who had been drawn to Vedanta during the years Swamiji had been away—would have been present to greet him.

In any case, it must have been with joy that he met his friends, old and new, and with particular delight that he embraced his brother monks, Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda, after a six-month separation. Then there was Sister Nivedita, whom he had left in Chicago in late November of 1899 to attempt on her own, in this foreign and not altogether friendly land, to arouse the kind of sympathy for India that would manifest itself in money—an enormous amount of sympathy indeed. Her path had been hard and, on the whole, unrewarding. It is impossible to suppose that during the past six months or so she had not suffered many an emotional crisis, not the least of which lay in now confronting her great Guru, who must surely have looked deeply into her mind, questioning, knowing. But of Sister Nivedita I shall say more later on.

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Swamiji's return to New York was noted in both the *New York Daily Tribune* and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The *Eagle*, whose editors knew him well from lectures and controversies of earlier years, published on June 9 the following item:

VIVEKANANDA RETURNS

The arrival in New York yesterday [?] of Swami Vivekananda, who was a delegate to the Congress of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and has since lectured in different parts of this country, will be of interest to many who heard him in Brooklyn under the auspices of the Ethical Society. The Swami has just come from California, where for the past six months he has lectured and taught the Vedanta philosophy. He is now on his way to the Paris Exposition and will remain a few weeks in this city at the home of the Vedanta Society, 102 East Fifty-eighth street, Manhattan. A reception will be given there in his honor on Tuesday evening.

The next day the *Tribune* printed the following item, which, though adding little to the above, would have been welcome news to many of Swamiji's New York friends and students:

VIVEKANANDA HERE

Swami Vivekananda, who after the close of the Congress of Religions in Chicago, to which he was a delegate, formed the Vedanta Society, arrived here yesterday on his way to the Paris Exposition. He has for six months been lecturing and teaching the Vedanta philosophy in California and the West. He will remain in this city for a few weeks at the home of the society, No. 102 East Fifty-eighth-st., where a reception will be given for him on Tuesday evening.

Much of what is known of Swamiji's lectures and classes during this period is contained in the report of the assistant

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

secretary of the Vedanta Society to the *Brahmavadin*, which has been republished in the *Life* and there reads as follows:

On June 7, Swami Vivekananda came to New York from California and stayed in the Vedanta Society Rooms, 102 E. 58th St., with Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda. At that time Sister Nivedita was also in the City and she was present at most of the meetings.

On the following Saturday, June 9, Swami Vivekananda conducted the morning class on the Bhagavad-Gita, relieving Swami Turiyananda, who usually taught the class. On Sunday morning, June 10, Swami Vivekananda lectured in the Vedanta Society Rooms on the subject of "Vedanta Philosophy." The rooms were filled to their utmost capacity with students and old friends of the Swami. A reception was given to him on the following Friday evening, thus giving an opportunity to old friends to meet him once more, and many students who had long wished to meet the renowned author of *Raja Yoga*, were made happy by a few kind words and a grasp of the Master's hand. He spoke on the object of the Vedanta Society, and of the work in America.

[I interrupt the report at this point to note that the newspapers had stated that the reception for Swamiji was to be held not on Friday evening, June 15, but on Tuesday evening, June 12. On the strength of this erroneous information, a good many people must have come three days early to meet Swamiji. One cannot but remark also on how regrettable it is that, except for his expression of satisfaction that the Society could afford to rent a whole house, we have no notes of his talk at the reception—regrettable because as far as is known this was the only occasion on which he spoke on "the object of the Vedanta Society and of the work in America." But to continue with the assistant secretary's report:]

The next morning, Saturday, June 17 [actually,

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

June 16], [Swami Vivekananda] also took charge of the class and [on Sunday, June 17] lectured on "What is Religion?" Sister Nivedita spoke in the evening on "The Ideals of Hindu Women," giving a most beautiful and sympathetic account of their simple life and purity of thought. The women students, who were always eager to hear of the every-day life and thought of their Hindu sisters, especially enjoyed this talk. The Sister Nivedita was pleased at this interest and answered many questions giving a clearer idea of life in India to most than they had ever known.

On June 23, Swami Vivekananda conducted the Gita class, and on Sunday, June 24, he lectured on "The Mother-Worship." In the evening Sister Nivedita spoke again on "The Ancient Arts of India." Her talk was most entertaining because of her familiarity with the subject. Her visit and conversation were very instructive. . . .

Swami Vivekananda conducted the class on the morning of June 30, and the next morning, Sunday, July 1, lectured on the "Source of Religion." As on all previous occasions, the rooms were crowded, and all felt it a privilege to listen to him. On July 3, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda left New York, the former going to Detroit to visit old friends, and the latter to California to establish a *Santi Asrama*.

On July 10, Swami Vivekananda returned from Detroit and stayed at the Society rooms here until the latter part of July. On the 20th [?] he sailed for Paris. . . .⁸

Of Swamiji's first Sunday lecture and of her own moment of crisis, Sister Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod in a letter, a portion of which has been published in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*. (As published, this letter bears the date June 4, 1900, which, like the dates given to the other published excerpts of Sister Nivedita's New York letters, is manifestly incorrect.) After long, grueling, and largely fruitless work in

the United States—to which we shall return—Sister Nivedita had come to New York in early June. One sees Swamiji through her eyes in the Vedanta Society parlor—a being whose unimaginable grandeur memory could not contain, vast in superhuman serenity and power, and yet profoundly human. I shall quote here only her reaction to his presence, for of his lecture itself one finds her notes in an Appendix to *The Master as I Saw Him* as well as in the *Complete Works*, under the title “Unity.” This was the first of Swamiji’s Western lectures Nivedita had attended since, half-awed, half-skeptical, and more deeply stirred than she had known at the time, she had heard him speak in 1895 and ’96 to London audiences.

Swami has just lectured [she wrote]. I went early and took the seat at the left end of the second row—always my place in London, though I never thought of it at the time.

Then as we sat and waited for him to come in, a great trembling came over me, for I realized that this was, simple as it seemed, one of the test-moments of my life. Since last I had done this thing, how much had come and gone! My own life—where was it? Lost—thrown away like a cast-off garment that I might kneel at the feet of this man. Would it prove a mistake; an illusion; or was it a triumph of choice; a few minutes would tell.

And then he came; his very entrance and his silence as he stood and waited to begin were like some great hymn. A whole worship in themselves.

At last he spoke—his face broke into fun, and he asked what was to be his subject. Someone suggested the Vedanta philosophy and he began...

...The splendid sentences rolled on and on, and we, lifted into the Eternities, thought of our common selves as of babies stretching out their hands for the moon or the sun—thinking them as baby’s toys. The wonderful voice went on...

At last—the whole dying down and away in the

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

thought—"I could not see *you* or speak to you for a moment—I who stand here seeing and talking—if this Infinite Unity were broken for a moment—if one little atom could be crushed and moved out of its place.... Hari Om Tat Sat!"

And for me—I had found the infinitely deep things that life holds for us. To sit there and listen was all that it had ever been. Yet there was no struggle of intellectual unrest now—no tremor of novelty.

This man who stood there held my life in the hollow of his hand—and as he once in a while looked my way, I read in his glance what I too felt in my own heart, complete faith and abiding comprehension of purpose—better than any feeling....⁹

Sister Nivedita's report of Swamiji's first lecture as published in volume eight of the *Complete Works* duplicates in essence her report to Miss MacLeod, but it is somewhat more full. "These distinctions which we so love," she quoted Swamiji as having said, "are all parts of one infinite fact, and only differ in the degree of expression. That one infinite fact is the attainment of freedom.... We seek neither misery nor happiness, but freedom. This one aim is the secret of the insatiable thirst of man.... One Infinite alone can satisfy him, and that Infinite is Himself. When he realizes this, then alone comes freedom...." And Sister Nivedita quoted Swamiji's cry of sorrow for all mankind: "Our lives are but a passing from dream to dream. Man the infinite dreamer, dreaming finite dreams!"¹⁰

There exist two sets of notes of Swamiji's second lecture (Sunday, June 17), "What is Religion?" One of these is published in the Appendices of *The Master as I Saw Him*; the other and much more full set can be found in volume one of the *Complete Works*. The former was, presumably, taken down by Sister Nivedita; but who took down the latter we do not know.

In the lecture "Unity" Swamiji had equated unity with freedom; now, in "What is Religion?" he equated the quest for

freedom with religion. " 'Freedom, O Freedom!' is the song of the soul," he said. (I quote here from the briefer notes.) "All worship, all desire for miracles, is, at bottom, this thirst for Freedom. Science on her countless watch-towers signals back to the asking soul, 'No, not yet! Nature has no freedom. She is all law.' This is why the idea of God is essential to the Mind. There *must* be the concept of some being or beings with Freedom. Religion thus becomes only a question of the materialisation or personification of the idea. Even a plant could not be, without this notion of Freedom. Embodied Freedom, the Master of Nature, is what we call God."¹¹

In this same lecture Swamiji spoke, as he had in California, of God as the giver of "not only all that we call good, but evil also." "He who gave us life, He is pouring out of His vial the direst death. . . . So face nature. Face ignorance. Face illusion. Never fly. . . . A moment of terror and then—It is the Lord! The world has been ever preaching the God of virtue; I preach to you a God of virtue and of sin. No more looking up and down at each other! The less differentiation, the sooner God. This is the one sin, differentiation. This is the door to hell, differentiation. Only when this is broken, when it is pulverised to atoms, can we attain the goal."¹²

"And so," as Sister Nivedita wrote to Josephine MacLeod, "the splendid sentences rolled on and on. . . ."¹³

"Mother Worship" (Swamiji's lecture of Sunday, June 24) was a subject on which he seems never before to have lectured, but this reticence had not been out of distaste. "This morning at eleven," Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod on June 24 (not July 24, as in the *Reminiscences*), "he is to lecture on *Mother-Worship*, and you shall have every word of that lecture, if I have to pay ten dollars to get it taken down. It was mentioned by someone yesterday to me, before him," she continued, "and he turned and said, smiling, 'Yes—*Mother-Worship*—that's what I am going to lecture on, and that is what I love.'"¹⁴

If Sister Nivedita obtained a full verbatim transcript of the lecture, it is not, as far as I know, available today. All we have

are "Fragmentary Notes, Taken by Miss Waldo," and published in both *The Master as I Saw Him* and volume eight of the *Complete Works* under the title "The Worship of the Divine Mother." Again Swamiji explained that the evil of the world, as well as the good, was divine. "This world," he said, "is all alike the play of Mother. But we forget this. Even misery can be enjoyed when there is no selfishness, when we have become the witness of our own lives. . . . See Her in all, good and bad alike. Then alone will come 'sameness,' the Bliss Eternal that is Mother Herself, when we realise Her thus. Until then, misery will pursue us. Only resting in Mother are we safe."¹⁵

Of the Bhagavad Gita classes that Swamiji took over from Swami Turiyananda, we know only what Sister Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod. But the passage in her letter, brief as it is, is a beautiful and revealing one, and although I have quoted a little from it in an earlier chapter, it is worth giving here in full. (In the *Reminiscences* this letter is dated July 15, 1900; the correct date is June 16.)

This morning the lesson on the Gita was grand. It began with a long talk on the fact that the highest ideals are not for all. Non-resistance is *not* for the man who thinks the replacing of the maggot in the wound, by the leprous saint, with "Eat, Brother!" disgusting and horrible. Non-resistance is practised by a mother's love towards an angry child. It is a travesty in the mouth of a coward, or in the face of a lion.

Let us be true. Nine-tenths of our life's energy is spent in trying to make people *think* us that which we are not. That energy would be more rightly spent in *becoming* that which we would like to be. And so it went—beginning with the salutation to an incarnation:

Salutation to thee—the *guru* of the universe,
Whose footstool is worshipped by the gods.
Thou one unbroken Soul,
Physician of the world's diseases.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Guru of even the gods,
To thee our salutation.

Thee we salute. Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
In the Indian tones—by Swami himself.

There was an implication throughout the talk that Christ and Buddha were inferior to Krishna—in the grasp of problems—inasmuch as they preached the highest ethics as a world-path, whereas Krishna saw the right of the *whole*, in all its parts—to its own differing ideals. But perhaps no one not familiar with his thought would have realized that this lay behind his exclamation, “*The Sermon on the Mount* has only become another bondage for the soul of man!”

All through his lectures now, he shows this desire to understand life as it is, and to sympathize with it. He takes less of the “Not this, not this” attitude and more of the “Here comes and now follows” sort of tone. But I fear that people find him even more out of touch at a first hearing than ever used to be the case.¹⁶

But if some found Swamiji “out of touch” with the surface of life, it was because he stood at the incandescent center of things, and many in his audience found themselves drawn as by a powerful magnet into depths theretofore unguessed. “As he is now,” Sister Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod, “nothing can resist him.”¹⁷ Swamiji was not at all unaware of the effect of his lectures and classes. Some twenty years later Swami Turiyananda was to say to a group of devotees at Benares, “Swamiji used to tell us, ‘Do you think I only lecture? I know I give them something solid, and they know they receive something solid.’ In New York Swamiji was lecturing to a class,” Swami Turiyananda continued. “Oh, the tremendous effect of it! K. [Swami Abhedananda] said that while listening to the lecture he felt as if some force was drawing the Kundalini up, as at the time of meditation. After the lecture was finished (it took an hour) K. announced that he would hold a question

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

class. Most of the audience had gone after Swamiji's lecture. Swamiji rebuked—saying, 'A question-class after this! Do you want to spoil the effect of my lecture?' Just see! Oh, what a Power Shri Ramakrishna left for the world in Swamiji! Hasn't he changed the very thought-current of the world?"¹⁸

A Mrs. Lillian Montgomery, who attended Swamiji's New York lectures and classes in 1900, was asked fifty-four years later by Swami Pavitrananda to tell her memories of them. The following passages, which I quote with the Swami's kind permission, are taken from the letter she wrote in reply:

It was in June 1900 I came in touch with Swami Vivekananda.

I knew nothing about him.

Someone had told me a Swami was to speak at the Vedanta house, somewhere in the Fifties, just off of Park Avenue.

I had seen his photograph and wasn't impressed, but, was interested to hear what he might say.

Little did I dream I was to see a personality that would be a revelation—one that embodied a light I had never seen—nor have I ever seen that light manifest to such a degree of pure glow in any other form.

I arrived early and took my place in the front row.

After an interval, a door at the left opened—Swami entered quietly—his air was unassuming—but, your attention was immediately fixed—there was something unusual, indefinable about his presence.

He took his place in a high-back chair on the rostrum just in front of me.

His eyes closed. He sat in meditation. I was fascinated. He had the most perfect head I had ever seen. Perfectly poised. It might have been that of a living Buddha.

Then came the voice in the chant of a Sanskrit invocation—but, a voice of what exceptional quality!

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

It was mellow, but full—resonant—in tone, bell-like—but, above all, it *rang so true*.

He rose to speak—phrases flowed forth—without effort—but, every word was molded round a light that brought new significance to its meaning—he was *living* the very thoughts he was expressing.

There seemed an absence of the sense of ego.

As if the outer form were absorbing a light of intelligence pouring down from some infinite source.

He was revealing a realm of consciousness unknown to me. I saw as it were a lake of consciousness that filled space back of him, and somehow focused and was pouring through his words.

Veil after veil was falling from my mind's eye—a new universe was being revealed—the possibility of personality—the relationship of the individual soul with the divine.

He quoted, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Words I had heard all my life, but now it was as if the purity of the heart of the speaker was reflecting Divinity at this moment—a new conception of the quotation.

The conviction came then, and has never changed, that he had, within, the 'Pearl of Great Price'—that for which we all longed, and, that Culture not possession, was the thing most desired.

There was a brilliance of mind, clothed in the warmth of the heart, and an impressive calmness as he spoke words of wisdom that were leading you into a realm of higher truth unknown.

Being in his presence brought knowledge not to be obtained in books, because you saw he had within himself a *Reality* that outvalued all the wealth in the world.

I always left his presence treading air—he had made so clear that life was such a wonderful thing...

Was he so aware of the inner Perfection that he could draw it into manifestation for others to witness?...

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Less than two months before those unforgettable days in June 1900, Swamiji had written Miss MacLeod saying, "Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a break" —and later in the same letter speaks of that state as "the voiceless, the strange, the wonderful," before which he was a spectator, no more an actor.

Two years later on July Fourth he passed away.

At that time Sister Nivedita remarked that before the end for some time, more and more, she had been conscious of being in a luminous presence—his form appeared as a shadow—never had she felt so strongly as then that she stood on the threshold of an Infinite Light.

I was to be drawn to him between these two periods. Is it strange that to me at that time the luminous flood of consciousness was so apparent?

Or that the voice that flowed from that crystal pure reality should have the ring of Truth, and a sonority of unusual quality and beauty?

And, is it difficult to understand, why, for fifty-four years, Swami Vivekananda has been to me like a beacon light "becoming a distant Goal"!¹⁹

According to a number of entries in Swami Abhedananda's diary for this period, Swamiji's classes and lectures at the Society in New York were as well attended as one could expect for the summer month of June. To the Saturday morning class about thirty people regularly came; and at the Sunday morning lectures the attendance was almost always over a hundred. In addition to recording the size of the audiences, Swami Abhedananda jotted down the amount of the Sunday collections. These seem to have been incredibly—one might say, disgracefully—small, averaging about fifteen dollars. (Yet fifteen dollars for a hundred people was, one might also say, a good deal more generous than the collection at the Unitarian church in Oakland of thirty dollars for fifteen hundred; and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

on one Sunday morning in New York two bounteous checks for twenty dollars each were added to the plate.) As for the class, Swami Abhedananda noted the collection on only one Saturday: "about \$3.50."

However, Swamiji no longer cared about earning money; nor did he want to lecture before large crowds. "This time I want to let upon New York the charge of the Light Brigade,"²⁰ he had written to Miss MacLeod on April 10, just before moving from San Francisco to Alameda. But two months later his mood had changed. Telling of these days, Miss Waldo writes in her brief account of his life and work in America, "He gave a few public lectures, but he did not care to do much work of this kind. He was chiefly desirous to meet his old friends and disciples and as in the days at Thousand Island Park he spent most of his time in teaching them and in conversation with them. It was a happy time apparently for both Teacher and disciples. All too soon, it came to an end."²¹ Regrettably, Miss Waldo, who had taken down invaluable notes of Swamiji's talks at Thousand Island Park, of which he once said to her with delighted approval, "How could you have caught my thought and words so perfectly!"²² did not (as far as we know) take notes of his informal classes and talks at 102 East Fifty-eighth Street, and thus much of that long period, the very last he was to spend among his American disciples, a period in which he surely held back nothing of thought or of power, is lost to us.

It is largely through Nivedita's notes and letters that we know anything at all of Swamiji's New York lectures. Once again near her Guru, she once again hung on his every word and once again kept Miss MacLeod advised. Nivedita herself, however, had somewhat changed; she was no longer the ardent young crusader, fully confident of conquering the world with the power of her own enthusiasm. Behind her lay a season of arduous, frustrating work, of traveling from place to place in an unsuccessful attempt to raise money for her girls' school. By the end of April she had collected \$1,046, the \$1,000 of

which had been contributed by Mrs. Leggett, a friend, so to speak, of her father's. Other friends of Swamiji's had done what they could. In March, for instance, she formed "The Rama-krishna Guild of Help in America," the purpose of which was to raise funds for her proposed Widows' and Girls' Home and School in India. Mrs. Leggett was president; Mrs. Bull was honorary national secretary; there were a number of vice-presidents, who represented the cities of New York, Chicago, Boston, Cambridge, and Detroit, and all of whom, with perhaps one exception, were close friends of Swamiji's. On her own, Nivedita had made no lasting mark on the American mind, had gained no substantial support. She had, in fact, received many a rebuff, perhaps the most crushing and least expected of which had come from Mary Hale, whom she had, all unwittingly, managed to offend.

It would be unrealistic to think that Nivedita's overall failure in America, coming as it had on the heels of the London debacle, had not disheartened her. Swamiji, who well knew the difficulty of pleading India's cause in America, was equally well aware of his disciple's hours of despondency. Throughout those trying months, he had written many bracing, consoling letters to her, assuring her that somehow money for her school would come; or, "if it does not come, who cares?" he said. "One road is quite as good as the other. Mother knows best." He assured her also that he would again take London by storm. "Things shall look up for us, never mind," he wrote from Los Angeles. "As soon as the [Boer] war is finished we go to England and try to do a big work there. What do you think? . . . Sturdies and 'Shakies' will all come round—hold on. You are learning your lessons—that is all I want."²³ And later from San Francisco: "Finish your books, and in Paris we are going to conquer the Froggies."²⁴

It was in March, after months of talking before largely unresponsive women's circles, that Nivedita met Patrick Geddes. She met him through the Leggetts, at whose New York house she was staying for a time, and she came to know him

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

fairly well. The eminent sociologist, who was then in his forty-sixth year and whose mind was shooting out ideas as a Roman candle shoots out stars, found an intelligent, eager listener in this intense young woman; she, for her part, was dazzled. Like one starving, she sat down with avidity to the intellectual feast Professor Geddes spread before her, and on March 13 she wrote to Swamiji, telling him of her new friend:

Long years ago in England—in the year I first met you, Norman Wyld...told me that if I cd only know Prof. Geddes—to whom he was proud to be disciple—my soul wd be saved, & my attitude to Life determined for ever—

*This function however was played by some one else!—*Yet all the time in Kashmir I used to tell S. Sara'and Yum Yum of this man & of the claim Norman had made for him—that he was the first Sociologist since Spencer to produce a new & living theory of Society with a future in it.

Hence the present facts.

He is not in the least disappointing. But I am glad that I found my own place in the world before I met him. He is a light—beautiful & lovable—...He is a biologist—professor of Botany & Biology—I forget which—at Edinburgh—has brought out various books—but is better known as an inspirer or stimulator of men in many activities than as anything very technical. His wife & he say that Biologists look askance upon him because he wanders off into Economics & Sociology & what he calls “Geotechnics,” instead of keeping to his subject.

To look at...he is a wee bit like a kind, wise, horned owl—comparatively young, but with a sort of venerableness of thought—& the most loving & reverent aspect to ignorance & weakness that I have ever seen—a great *tenderness*, in fact.²⁵

Nivedita went on at considerable length, telling Swamiji of

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Professor Geddes's many ideas, one flowering from the other, creating rich, fluvial "sequences."

"I enjoyed your account of Prof. Geddes," Swamiji replied, and added with perhaps unintentional irreverence, "and Joe has a funny account of a clairvoyant."²⁶

On March 21, Patrick Geddes and his wife left New York for Paris where he was to organize various sessions of the International Association for the Advancement of Science, Arts and Education at the Paris Exposition. Sister Nivedita, fascinated with many of his theories regarding the evolution of society in relation to environment, wanting to study them more deeply, and seeing in them an application to India's problems, committed herself to working for him, for a time, as secretary. She arranged to meet him in Paris in early July.

It was only a few days before Sister Nivedita left New York that a windfall came her way—again through Swamiji. As he had wished, she called upon Mrs. Collis Potter Huntington, whom, as the reader will remember, he had met in San Francisco and who, hearing from him of Nivedita's work, had wanted to help it. Mrs. Huntington has been written of by most chroniclers of the era as given to an ostentation second to none among the wives of the fabulously rich railroad and mining moguls. At the time of our story, when Arabella Huntington was in her late forties, she reigned not merely from one mansion, but from two, the vast edifice on Nob Hill having been something of an afterthought. Earlier, she had persuaded her husband, a man personally frugal in the extreme, to build a two-million-dollar house in New York at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street—a mansion which turned out to look, it is said, "a good deal like a fancy warehouse," and which bulged with large *objets d'art*. But however many huge and ornately furnished houses Mrs. Huntington may have presided over, she clearly appreciated Swamiji and wanted, quite sincerely and without fanfare, to donate to his cause. He, in turn, as one may judge from his acceptance of her help, must have recognized her sincerity.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Nivedita's few meetings with Mrs. Huntington (no doubt at the Fifth Avenue house) were more financially rewarding than her long months of hard work. On the morning of June 26, she wrote to Miss MacLeod: "Yesterday Mrs. C. P. Huntington gave me \$5,000 & Swami says there is no longer any secret. He only did not want you all to know until the thing was done—as that sort of thing makes people ridiculous. When Mrs. Leggett comes back to New York Mrs. H. looks forward to knowing her & after consulting with her & securing her advice, to making a further yearly donation to the School."²⁷

Whether or not Mrs. Huntington continued to make donations to Sister Nivedita's school, I do not know. Possibly not, for her attention soon turned elsewhere. In August of 1900, Collis P. Huntington, the most powerful of all the railroad tycoons of that era, and perhaps the most hated for his ruthless dealings and what was said to be his "scrupulous dishonesty," died of a heart attack in his summer camp in the Adirondacks. Shortly thereafter Mrs. Huntington became absorbed in the collection of art works. (Thirteen years later she married her late husband's nephew, Henry E. Huntington, a multi-millionaire in his own right and himself a large-scale collector of paintings. Their combined fortune was enormous, and together the Huntingtons collected the rarest books and finest paintings available. The Huntington Library and Museum in San Marino, California—not far from Pasadena—is their enduring legacy to America.)

Sister Nivedita had now gathered, in all, \$6,500, \$1,000 of which sum was from Mrs. Leggett and \$5,000 from Mrs. Huntington. It is reasonable to guess that at least some of the remainder had been contributed by the vice-presidents of the Ramakrishna Guild of Help. But in whatever way the money had come, it was, in terms of Indian currency, a sizable amount. "Swami says that the interest of the present sum will give me in Calcutta a monthly income of at least 50 Rs. [about \$17]," Nivedita continued in her letter of June 26, "and that that, with what I may gain in the next few months, will be

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

enough to begin upon. So he wants me to leave for Calcutta next January or February!!! Won't that be joyful?"

Two days after writing this letter, Sister Nivedita sailed from New York for Paris, where Patrick Geddes awaited her help. (It should be mentioned that in a letter of June 23, published in the *Complete Works*, Swamiji wrote, "Margot starts on the 26th." This is an error, perhaps typographical. The correct date was June 28.)

Nivedita's conception of her work in India had not yet changed, as it was to do later on. The day before her departure, a New York newspaper (today unidentified) printed an interview with her in which she outlined her future plans. The article read in part:

Sister Nivedita, of the Order of Ramakrishna, will leave New-York to-morrow for Paris, on her way to India, where she hopes to resume work in the autumn [?].

Sister Nivedita is in secular life Miss Margaret E. Noble, an English woman, whose interest in India led to her joining the Vedantic order in which she is enrolled. She came to the United States some months ago in the interest of the Ramakrishna School for Girls, about to be established in Calcutta. Miss Noble says:

It is wholly a mistake to suppose that I have renounced either my nationality or my religion in becoming a sister of the order. Christianity is the nursery in which my spiritual thought was trained. In acquiring the larger lessons of life that come when the world opens to us, we do not renounce the valuable teachings of the nursery. . . .

I went to India through the influence of a friend in England who was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and placed myself under his direction to a certain extent in my early work. The first thing I had to do was learn Bengali, as none of the women or girls could speak English. In ten months I had acquired a working knowledge of the language, so that I opened my school. It was a day

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

school, and in the time of its existence, which was nearly a year, I learned what was really needed in India, and it was decided to make the attempt to establish such a school under the auspices of the order and especially of the Swami Vivekananda.

My object is to educate the Hindoo girl as the English and American girl is being educated, without any impertinent interference with her religious beliefs or social customs. We make a serious mistake in such interference....

At present our efforts must be directed to the higher classes, but eventually I hope to reach all. The Hindoo girls who are trained in our schools will go home eager to specialize in various social directions. We shall teach the Bengali and the English language, literature, elementary mathematics and some one elementary science with extreme thoroughness, and manual training, beginning in the kindergarten and finally reviving old Indian industries and arts. I believe that manual training gives more effectiveness to character than anything else....

We intend, if we succeed in acquiring means, to buy a house and a piece of land on the banks of the Ganges near Calcutta, and there to take in some twenty widows and twenty orphan girls—the whole community to be under the guidance and authority of Sarada Devi.

I am sure that the plan will succeed. I have found much sympathy and encouragement in America. Two New-York women have given the bulk of the money I have received here, one contributing \$5,000 and one \$1,000, and a Ramakrishna Guild of Help has been formed, from which we expect much. Mrs. Francis H. Leggett is the president, Mrs. Ole Bull of Cambridge is National secretary, and there are branches in a number of the large cities.

Miss Noble is an earnest woman and wears the simple black gown of the order. Her only ornament is a Hindoo

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

rosary, which differs from the Roman Catholic in having 108 beads, instead of 100. It is older than the Roman Catholic and is intended merely as an aid in concentration of thought.²⁸

11

While Swamiji was in New York an event of great moment took place in connection with his work in California. As was bound to happen sooner or later, it had become apparent to some of the Vedanta students in New York that one could not enter deeply into the search for God without at the same time wanting to renounce the world externally as well as internally and devote oneself to intense spiritual practice. It was also apparent that in Western countries where the mendicant monk was not an acceptable part of the community, outward renunciation, unless one joined an established monastery or convent, was impossible or, at least, highly impractical. Swamiji had long ago foreseen this difficulty and during his first visit to the West had often spoken of the need for a Vedantic ashrama or retreat. But it was not until early in 1899, when one of Swami Abhedananda's students, Cornelius Heijblom (sometimes spelled Heyblom), renounced the world and received the name by which we already know him—Gurudasa—that the problem became real. Another of Swami Abhedananda's students, Miss Minnie C. Boock, offered a solution. She possessed, it so happened, a homestead in California that had been issued to her some eight years earlier by President Harrison and that contained, according to the Official Plat of the Survey, "one hundred and fifty-nine acres and eighty-nine hundredths of an acre." This property could, she thought, fill the need for an ashrama. "It had its disadvantages," Gurudasa (then Swami Atulananda) later wrote, "it was fifty miles from the nearest railway station and market, but it would do to begin with. It would be solitary anyhow. And she very generously offered this place to Swami Vivekananda."¹

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

This, incidentally, was not the first time Swamiji had been offered a piece of land in California. In April of 1896, just as he was leaving New York for London, a telegram arrived: "Gift to Swami from Richardson, valleyland California for retreat. Will write particulars. Bon voyage. Florence Adams."² Who Richardson was and where in California the "valleyland" was located, we do not know at present. In any case, nothing seems to have come of the offer; it was wrongly cued, as though the idea of a retreat in California had somehow slipped from its place in the ordered course of things, appearing like a portent long before the time was ripe.

The time was ripe on June 25, 1900, on which date Miss Minnie Boock deeded her homestead to Swamiji, "to have and to hold," the record reads, "...in trust for the general use and benefit of the Vedanta School of Philosophy."³ Thus came into being Shanti Ashrama, the first Vedanta retreat in the Western world.

Swamiji accepted Miss Boock's gift with what must have been delight and toward the end of June sent off the following heretofore unpublished letter to Mrs. Hansbrough:

102 E. 58th
The Vedanta Society
[New York, N.Y.]

Dear Mrs. Hansbrough—

I have not written you a line since you left San Francisco. I am well and things are going on well with me.

I am in New York once more, where they have got now a home for the Society and their headquarters. I and the other Swamis also live there.

A San Francisco lady now here—owns a plot of land near Mt Hamilton 12 miles east of Lick observatory 160 acres in all. She is going to make us a present of it. It would be nice for a Summer gathering for us in California if friends like to go there *now* I will send them the written authority. Will you write to Mrs. Espinol [Aspinall]

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

and Miss Bell etc. about it. I am rather desirous it should be occupied this summer as soon as possible. There is only a log cabin on the land for the rest they must have tents.

I am sorry I can not spare a Swami yet.

With all love to you and Mrs. Wykoff and the baby of the family

Ever yours in the Truth

Vivekananda

P.S. Tell Helen—I thank her for her kind invitation but so sorry can not accept it now. After all you three sisters have become a part of my mind forever.

What about the [the word is illegible] ?⁴

V.

Swamiji himself wrote to Miss Bell (one learns from a letter of Ida Ansell's to Mr. Allan), asking her to go to the property and take possession. But Mrs. Aspinall, always practical and perhaps aware of the living conditions east of Lick Observatory, dissuaded her. In the meanwhile, Swamiji asked Swami Turiyananda, to whom he had already assigned the California work, to establish the Ashrama. "It is the will of the Divine Mother that you should take charge of the work there," Swamiji told him. Swami Turiyananda smiled. "Mother's will? Rather say it is *your* will. Certainly you have not heard the Mother communicate Her will to you in this matter." But Swamiji grew grave. "Yes, Brother," he said. "If our nerves become very fine, then you will be able to hear Mother's words directly." He spoke with such fervor that Swami Turiyananda's doubts were stilled.⁵ Even as a year or so earlier he had agreed, out of love for Swamiji, to come to America, so he now agreed to try to establish a retreat in far-off California.

Accompanied by Miss Boock, the Swami traveled to southern California, arriving on Sunday, July 8, 1900. As has not been heretofore known, the two travelers went directly to the small town of Alhambra (near Los Angeles), where they became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lister, Miss Boock's sister and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

brother-in-law. How many days Swami Turiyananda remained at the home of the Listers is not certain, but he carried with him an introductory letter from Swamiji to Mrs. Hansbrough, which he evidently sent to her at once. It read as follows:

3rd July 1900
102 E. 58th Street
New York

My dear Mrs. Hansborough—

This is to introduce Swami Turiyananda. The lady who gave the piece of land for Vedanta work belongs to Los Angeles. She has taken Turiyananda with her. He is a great spiritual teacher—but has no experience in platform work.

The best thing would be to help him to start a center for quiet and rest and meditation in the land near San Jose.

With all love to the holy Trinity

Ever yours in the Lord⁶
Vivekananda

In no time Swami Turiyananda found himself living in the Meads' house in South Pasadena, occupying, almost certainly, the room that Swamiji had lived in for so many weeks and coming to know the people Swamiji had known so well.

He stayed with the Meads for two weeks or so. Then he traveled to San Francisco, where, on the evening of Thursday, July 26, he was greeted by the Vedanta Class at its regular meeting at Dr. Logan's office. A week later, on the afternoon of Thursday, August 2, the Swami and eight students, including Mrs. Aspinall, Ida Ansell, and Dr. Logan (Miss Bell and Miss Boock had gone on ahead) traveled by train to the town of San Jose, sixty miles south of San Francisco. The following day they made a hot and arduous trek, partly by stagecoach, partly by mule-drawn wagon, thirty-five miles east over the mountains to the isolated San Antone Valley.

The story of Swami Turiyananda's valiant attempt to

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

establish a Vedanta retreat has never been fully told, for some of the material pertinent to it has been unpublished and generally unavailable. I have had the good fortune of seeing this material, which includes many letters written by the Swami himself to Mrs. Hansbrough during the two years he remained in California, but this is not the place to tell the story in any detail or at any length; for although Swami Vivekananda's acceptance of the land and his instructions to his brother monk to go there and establish a retreat are an important, indeed an inseparable, part of his work in the Western world, the story itself is not his, but Swami Turiyananda's.

It is enough to say here that it was a story of light and shadow both. Because of its remoteness, the San Antone Valley was an ideal place for a contemplative retreat; but it was a demanding place as well. There was very little water, the climate during most of the year was one of extremes—burning hot in summer, freezing cold in winter—and the accommodations were, to say the least, primitive. Further, the valley was a day's journey, for the most part over rough, barely passable roads, from a market or any other kind of store. None of these inconveniences mattered to Swami Turiyananda, nor would they have mattered to students trained in spiritual discipline and ready for a life of austerity, renunciation, and meditation; but with the exception of Gurudasa, none of those who spent a long or a short time at Shanti Ashrama (some came from the young San Francisco Vedanta Society and some from the Home of Truth) were thus ready.

Most of them, however, were earnest, and those who lived at the Ashrama for any length of time plunged into the new and difficult way of life with a zest and vigor that in the presence of Swami Turiyananda they could not help but feel. They were carried, as it were, in the current of his great spirituality. The Swami, Gurudasa later wrote, "never spared himself; he did not think of his own health or comforts; he had only one object, namely to bring these eager students to the feet of his Divine Master.... He became a channel of the inflow and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

outflow of a great spiritual Power. He had no other thought but to do God's will... The students *had* to respond; the Swami's ardour was infectious."⁷ And the Swami was constantly vigilant, watching carefully over his charges, teaching them, scolding them, correcting their shortcomings, helping them to break obstructive habits and attachments, striving to keep harmony; he looked after them, as he later said, "almost twenty-four hours a day." There was no respite for him.

Except for a period of three months in the early part of 1901, when he worked in San Francisco and Los Angeles, he lived continuously at the Ashrama. For the students, the experience was unforgettably beneficial; but the cost to Swami Turiyananda was high. Early in September of 1901, exhausted and badly in need of a change, he left the San Antone Valley for Donner Lake, a rustic resort area in the High Sierra. He stayed there for some five weeks and then went directly to San Francisco, where, almost at once, he became seriously ill. Recovering somewhat, he returned to Shanti Ashrama for the winter and spring. Only Gurudasa and two or three other students were with him during this period, and he remained much of the time in retirement.

Receiving news of his brother's illness, Swamiji, then in Benares, became concerned. He wrote anxiously to Mrs. Hansbrough in February. His letter, heretofore unpublished, read in full:

Benaras

14. Feb. 1902

My dear Mrs. Hansborough,

I am eternally indebted to you for what you did for me in the past and infinitely more now—for what you are doing to Turiyananda.

A gloom came over the Math when news reached Calcutta of his severe illness. Now—I hope—he has recovered completely—and I will be so glad to get the news from you.

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

It seems the American climate does not suit him—in that case it will be better for him to come over to India whenever he thinks fit.

In all probability I am going to Japan in a month or two. Ramakrishnananda accompanies me. Turiyananda may come over to Japan and I go to America—"Mother" knows best however and we obey.

I am just now in Benaras for a few days. All letters should however be addressed to the Belur Math.

Kindly convey my best love to Turiyananda and to yourself, the holy family and the other friends.

Ever yours in the Lord

Vivekananda

•P.S. Let Turiyananda take rest all the time now—he must not work at all till I reach Japan or America.⁸

V.

In March of 1902, Swamiji, increasingly anxious over his brother's health, wrote to Dr. Logan, asking that the Swami be sent back to India. Nor did he rest with this: he asked Swami Saradananda to write both to Dr. Logan and to Swami Turiyananda. Swamiji's letter no longer exists (if it was received); but that of Swami Saradananda to Dr. Logan, dated April 3, 1902, was written into the Society's Minutes. Mr. Wollberg's presumably true copy of it reads in part as follows:

My dear Dr. Logan:

...

The Swami [Vivekananda] hopes that you have received his letter by this time, requesting you to make arrangements to send the Swami Turiyananda back to India, as he has not been keeping well there.

The Swami has become very anxious to know of Swami T.'s last illness. He himself has not been keeping very well and only a little month ago we were seriously alarmed

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

to find him almost run down. He is much better however by a month's treatment & shows signs of perfect recovery ere long....

The Swami sends his love & blessings to you all and hopes that his letter to you intimating his wish to send Swami T. back has not been miscarried.

Most truly yours⁹
Saradananda

On June 6, 1902, Swami Turiyananda sailed from San Francisco for India. According to the *Pacific Vedantin*, he intended to return to California after a year's rest. But it is said that when his homeward-bound ship touched port in Rangoon and he learned the thunderbolt news of Swamiji's death a week earlier, he then and there, in an agony of grief, threw his Western clothes into the Bay of Bengal, knowing that he would never have the heart to return. And return he never did. There is evidence that this was as Swamiji would have wished. "Sarada [Swami Trigunatita] will soon be leaving for America to replace Brother Hari [Swami Turiyananda]," Swami Premananda wrote to Swami Abhedananda on August 20 of 1902. "Swamiji had arranged this before his death."¹⁰

Although it is true that an ashrama was not established on a working basis during Swami Turiyananda's stay in California, the months that he spent in the San Antone Valley, meditating, practicing austerities, living continually in a high state of spiritual consciousness, teaching from Sanskrit scriptures, chanting, speaking of God—those months, about fifteen in all, did not by any means go in vain. Shanti Ashrama still holds, as in a chalice, all that the great Swami gave to it—an undying legacy of spirit. He made it a holy place; and a holy place, a place of pilgrimage, it is today. Nor is it unlikely that at some future time it will flourish as a livable retreat for those who wish, and are ready, to renounce the world permanently and live a secluded, contemplative life dedicated to the full

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

realization of God. When that day comes—and surely it will come, though when, who can say?—the holy land that Swami Turiyananda created will be a source of spiritual inspiration and vitality to generations of people.

Further, one can, I think, surmise that when a Prophet of the stature of a Swami Vivekananda inaugurates a work on this visible level—no matter how small in measure it may be, or whether, as such, it succeeds or fails—a tremendous, creative current is set in motion on deeper, more subtle levels, which nothing can stop from eventually becoming a historical force. One might say, in short, that at Shanti Ashrama Swamiji's idea of Vedantic retreats in the Western world became a power, and their future establishment thus became assured.

12

But let us return to the summer of 1900 when Swamiji was still in New York and Swami Turiyananda was about to set out for California. It was in the late afternoon of July 3, two days after Swamiji's last Sunday lecture at the Vedanta Society, that the two Swamis, accompanied by Miss Minnie Boock, left New York. Swamiji was going as far as Detroit; Swami Turiyananda and Miss Boock were traveling on to Los Angeles.

Of Swamiji's visit in Detroit we know few details. He stayed at the home of Mrs. Greenstidel, the mother of Swamiji's disciple Sister Christine, whose address, as it appears on some old letters, was 418 Alfred Street. The house would not have been a rich one. Indeed, in writing of a visit to the Greenstidels in 1895, Leon Landsberg (then Swami Kripananda) spoke of the household as "very poor." Christine's father, "a noble, free-thinking German scholar," who had brought his family from Germany to Detroit in 1869 when Christine was three years old, had lacked business acumen and, "as a result, lost all his savings and inheritance."¹ Mr. Greenstidel died when Christine was seventeen, and the burden of supporting her

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

mother and five (some say six) younger sisters fell upon her shoulders, where it remained for many years. (It was not indeed until Mrs. Greenstidel died in early 1902 that Christine was free to answer Swamiji's call to serve his cause in India. She was to arrive in Calcutta on April 7, 1902, and there she was to remain, totally dedicated to his work of educating Hindu women, until 1914, when she returned to Detroit.)

But poor though they were, the Greenstidels would have shared with Swamiji whatever they had, and it was perhaps in their parlor that, as the *Life* tells us, he "once or twice held conversaziones for the benefit of his immediate disciples and intimate friends."² Of both disciples and friends Swamiji had many in Detroit, for, as is well known, he had spent several weeks in that city in 1894 and again in 1896, lecturing and holding classes. Except for Sister Christine and Mrs. Charles (Mary) Funke, however, we do not know the names of those who now gathered around him. (One old and dear friend would have been sadly missing. Mrs. John Bagley, who had introduced him to Detroit and had later stood by him when his enemies sought to discredit him, had died in 1898.)

It is from Mary Funke that we gain a glimpse of Swamiji at this particular period of his life. In London, in August of 1899, she had found him "very slim." Now, almost a year later, she found him slimmer still. "He had grown so thin, almost ethereal," she wrote, "—not long would that great spirit be imprisoned in clay. Once more we closed our eyes to the sad truth, hoping against hope."³ Swamiji had indeed grown slim—and this since he had left Los Angeles, for, as we shall find later, Miss MacLeod, on meeting him in Paris, was also to remark upon his loss of weight. Yet, Swamiji was not, one thinks, wasting away, and his health, though not good, was not at this time irreversibly poor. It was perhaps something else that Mrs. Funke saw: not a frailness of body but an expansion of spirit that made a stay of many more years on earth impossible to him.

"Well, Brother, my days are numbered," he had said to

Swami Abhedananda. "I shall live only for three or four years at the most." "You must not talk like that, Swamiji," Swami Abhedananda had remonstrated. "You are fast recovering your health..." But Swamiji had replied, "You do not understand me. I feel that I am growing very big. My self is expanding so much that at times I feel as if this body could not contain me any more. I am about to burst. Surely, this cage of flesh and blood cannot hold me for many days more."⁴ In the *Life* this conversation is placed in November of 1899; yet it seems far more in keeping with Swamiji's mood in June of 1900, when he had written not long before, "Bonds are breaking—love dying... I come, Lord, I come.... Everything is good and beautiful; for things are all losing their relative proportions to me—my body among the first."⁵

But in this withdrawal and this vastness of being, nothing seemed to slip from attention or be too small, too trivial, for his care. "The last time he was with us in Detroit," Mrs. Funke wrote, "he prepared for us the most delicious curries. What a lesson to his disciples,—the brilliant, the great and learned Vivekananda ministering to their little wants! He was at those times so gentle, so benign. What a legacy of sacred tender memories has he left us!"⁶

According to the *Life*, Swamiji spent seven days in Detroit, but this reckoning does not account for the two days he would have traveled to and fro on the train. To Swami Turiyananda he wrote, "I stayed in Detroit for three days only."⁷ This, too, however, is misleading; for he no doubt meant that he had remained three *more* days in Detroit after his brother had gone on to the Pacific Coast. The truth very likely is that Swamiji stayed in Detroit for five days in all and then returned directly to New York, arriving there, as we know, on July 10.

From then on, until he sailed on July 26 for Europe, Swamiji lived alone at the Vedanta Society's house. "It is frightfully hot here in New York," he wrote on July 18 to Swami Turiyananda, who was then in California. "... I have not heard from Sister Nivedita yet.... Kali [Swami Abhedananda] went away

about a week ago to the mountains [for a vacation in the Adirondacks with his disciple Dr. Herschell Parker]. He cannot come back till September. I am all alone, and washing; I like it. Have you seen my friends? Give them my love.”⁸

Apart from his intimate classes and talks and his more formal weekend Gita classes and lectures, we know very little of Swamiji's activities in New York that sweltering summer. Here and there, however, one catches a glimpse of him. We see him, for instance (through Swami Abhedananda's diary), spending the rainy afternoon of June 14 with Swami Turiyananda and a Dr. Katie Stanton at Coney Island. (Swami Abhedananda had escorted them there and had then returned home.) Again, on June 19, we find him riding with Swami Abhedananda on the Third Avenue El to the Bronx Zoo. (They did not return home from that excursion until seven o'clock, at which time Mr. Walter Goodyear came to dine.) And on a Sunday afternoon, after lecturing in the morning on "Mother Worship," he and the two Swamis drove in an open hansom through Central Park accompanied—or perhaps trailed—by Miss Waldo, the Society's housekeeper Mrs. Crane, Sister Nivedita, and a Mr. Thomson. Again, one sees Swamiji and Swami Abhedananda on the balmy, moonlit evening of June 10 walking home (perhaps across Central Park and down Fifth Avenue) from the house of Miss Mary Phillips (which was now at 208 West Seventy-second Street), where they had been guests at dinner. And we learn that on the evening of June 22, Swamiji again had dinner at Miss Phillips's.

In the quiet days of July after his return from Detroit, one finds Swamiji at the breakfast table one morning designing the emblem that was later to become the seal of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and that is today so familiar to the readers of the Order's literature. It was Sister Devamata who wrote of the incident in her *Memories of India and Indians*, first published serially in *Prabuddha Bharata* of 1932. (In 1896 Sister

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Devamata—then Laura Glenn—had regularly attended Swamiji's New York lectures and classes. She received her monastic name years later from Swami Paramananda.)

The design which has become the symbol of the Ramakrishna Mission everywhere [she wrote in her *Memories*] came into being in the same casual way as did the "Song of the Sannyasin." It took shape in 1900 during Swami Vivekananda's later visit to America. At that time the Vedanta Society of New York was definitely established and occupied a modest house in Fifty-eighth Street. Mrs. Crane, the housekeeper, told me that the Swami was sitting at the breakfast table one morning when the printer arrived. He said he was making a circular for the Society and wished to have an emblem to go on it, could the Swami suggest something? Swamiji took the envelope from a letter he had just received, tore it open and on the clean inner surface drew the waves, the swan, the lotus, and the sun circled by a serpent—the four Yogas wrapped about by eternity, it seemed. He threw the bit of paper with the design on it across the table and said, "Draw it to scale." Henry van Haagen, the printer, was an able draughtsman as well as printer. He converted the rough sketch into a finished drawing.⁹

(Mr. Van Haagen, incidentally, was among those who had become Swamiji's disciples in an earlier year. It was to him that Swamiji had once said in response to an expression of regret that the Swami's sublime teachings had no larger following: "I could have thousands more at my lectures if I wanted them. It is the sincere student who will help to make this work a success and not merely the large audiences. If I succeed in my whole life to help one man to reach freedom, I shall feel that my labours have not been in vain, but quite successful.")¹⁰

Sister Devamata's interpretation of Swamiji's design was not quite correct. "The sun=Knowledge," Swamiji explained to

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Miss MacLeod, shortly after creating the design. "The stormy water=Work. The lotus=Love. The serpent=Yoga. The swan=the Self. The Motto=May the Swan (the Supreme Self) send us that. It is the mind-lake."¹¹

Later on in India Swamiji again explained the significance of the design, this time to the artist Ranadaprasad Das Gupta. "The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma," he said; "the lotus, of Bhakti; and the rising-sun, of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for the Paramatman (Supreme Self). Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, the vision of the Paramatman is obtained."¹²

Another glimpse of Swamiji in New York comes to us through the memoirs of Sister Christine, who was in the city for at least a part of Swamiji's stay there, having returned with him from his visit to Detroit.

In New York [she wrote], once there was a pitiful little group that clung to him with pathetic tenacity. In the course of a walk he had gathered up first one and then another. This ragged retinue returned with him to the house of 58th Street which was the home of the Vedanta Society. Walking up the flight of steps leading to the front door the one beside him thought, "Why does he attract such queer abnormal people?" Quick as a flash he turned and answered the unspoken thought. "You see, they are Shiva's demons."

And from Sister Christine another glimpse during this same summer of that endless compassion:

Walking along Fifth Avenue one day, with two elderly forlorn devoted creatures walking in front, he said, "Don't you see, life has conquered them!" The pity, the compassion for the defeated in his tone! Yes, and something else

A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

—for then and there, the one who heard, prayed and vowed that never should life conquer her, not even when age, illness, and poverty should come. And so it has been. His silent blessing was fraught with power.¹³

Why Swamiji remained in New York so long—more than two weeks—after returning from Detroit is not clear. Perhaps it was to prolong his last days with his Western disciples; perhaps it was to attend to the publication of a new edition of *Karma Yoga*. (“I have straightened out my business here,” he wrote to Miss MacLeod on July 20. “The works are at Mr. Whitmarsh’s suggestion in the hands of Miss Waldo.”)¹⁴ And a few days later, “I am to start on Thursday next [July 26], by the French steamer *La Champagne*. The books are in the hands of Waldo and Whitmarsh. They are nearly ready.”)¹⁵ Or perhaps he was simply waiting, toward the end at least, for a ship on which to sail.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOMEWARD BOUND

1

On the afternoon of Friday, August 3, 1900, the S.S. *Champagne*, which Swamiji had boarded in New York on July 26, docked at Le Havre. Several hours later (at eight o'clock, according to his telegram to Mrs. Francis Leggett) he arrived at the Saint-Lazare station in Paris, that "capital of modern civilization," which, as he had written in his long Bengali article called in translation "The East and the West," was "the heaven of luxury, fashion and merriment on earth—the centre of arts and sciences."¹

Swamiji's telegram to Betty Leggett ("ARRIVE A HUIT HRES STLAZARE=VIVEKANANDA") was first reproduced in Swami Vidyatmananda's valuable series of articles on Swamiji's life in France in the summer and fall of 1900,² which traces Swamiji's footsteps as closely as possible, supplying information and material that had not before been known. I shall not retell all those findings here, for as far as the present book is concerned, Swamiji's stay in France was in the nature of a denouement, and this in a quite literal, or at least special, sense, it being in Paris that his Western mission came to an end. Actually, it had come to an end when he had boarded the *Champagne* in New York, or, if one wants to be even more exact, when he had boarded the *Overland Limited* at the Oakland mole. All that followed was, one might say, an added gift to the West from the abundance of his grace. I shall therefore only briefly review Swamiji's life in France; but in so doing, I shall draw freely and gratefully upon Swami Vidyatmananda's findings, as well as upon other sources, and shall add, when possible, a heretofore unknown detail or two.

HOMEWARD BOUND

Since writing his article, Swami Vidyatmananda has concluded that the "huit hres" of Swamiji's telegram to Mrs. Leggett meant eight o'clock in the evening. Who met the train from Le Havre is not, to my knowledge, recorded, but one can safely guess that among those present at the Gare Saint-Lazare was M. Gerald Nobel. M. Nobel was a friend of the Leggetts, always ready to lend a helping hand. In his large-scale, old-world courtesy he met not only members of the Leggett family at railway stations in Paris but friends of the family as well,³ taking care of their luggage, easing them into the city with a minimum of fuss, and finding them lodgings—his own, if need be. Tall, handsome, always immaculately dressed,⁴ M. Nobel was, it would seem, the very embodiment of friendship. "It is worth having been born to have made one friend as Mr. Nobel,"⁵ Swamiji once said of this kind and charming man.

Swamiji spent his first night in Paris at Gerald Nobel's apartment, but whether he did so because the Leggetts, for one reason or another, could not accommodate him or because Gerald Nobel asserted a prior claim, we do not know. It is certain in any case that M. Nobel was not a stranger to Swamiji in 1900. The two had met during Swamiji's first visit to the West—almost certainly in 1895 at the time of the Paris wedding of Besse (Betty) MacLeod Sturges and Francis Leggett. Swamiji had evidently expected to visit M. Nobel on his way from India to England in 1899, but the plan had been changed. "M. Nobel writes to me to defer my visit to him at Paris to some other date," Swamiji wrote to Mr. Sturdy from Port Said, "as he will have to be away for a long time."⁶ Later, it had been Gerald Nobel who made arrangements for Swamiji to speak at the Congress of the History of Religions in Paris. Indeed, in a sense, M. Nobel was one of Swamiji's Paris hosts—and thus it was but fitting that he should welcome him at his apartment the first night.

To the known story of Swamiji's life in Paris one can add here a brief description of that apartment. This comes to us from the letters of Dr. Lewis G. Jancs, who had sailed across

the Atlantic at the end of June on the same ship as Sister Nivedita. Dr. Janes remained in France until September 8, writing regularly and at length to his wife, at home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His letters were often full of description and were illustrated here and there with small drawings of, for example, French priests with long cassocks and broad-brimmed hats, or horse-drawn, double-decked omnibuses. Dr. Janes's daughters, Mrs. Charles Lyttle and Mrs. Edward T. Steel, have very kindly made a number of their father's letters available to me, together with pertinent passages from his diary and other material that has bearing on Swamiji's life and work. Although Dr. Janes says little about Swamiji in his letters from France, he was closely associated while he was there with Mrs. Bull and the Leggetts, and thus one catches a glimpse from time to time of the same France that Swamiji saw. One such glimpse is of M. Nobel's apartment, where Dr. Janes himself stayed. On July 6 he wrote home:

We were met by Miss MacLeod and her friend M. Nobel, who was most friendly and helpful in getting our baggage through and has kindly offered rooms at his lodgings for a week to Mr. Moore [Dr. Janes's traveling companion] and myself. We spent last night—a fraction of it—there. It is a typical French residence, opening into a court-yard, and with a pleasant garden wholly enclosed by the buildings. My room is on the garden, Mr. Moore's on the street. [The address, as given by Dr. Janes, was 66, rue Ampere.]⁷

From Swami Vidyatmananda's article we learn that after spending his first night in Paris as the guest of M. Nobel, Swamiji went the next morning at nine o'clock to the Leggetts' house at 6, place des Etats-Unis. Of this joyful event Miss MacLeod wrote the same day to Mrs. Bull, who was then in Brittany, that Swamiji had arrived looking like a boy. He had lost thirty pounds, she reported, and was vigorous. She went

HOMeward BOUND

on to say that the Geddases (not "Goddesses," as someone originally transcribed the word) were coming to the Leggetts' for lunch that day to meet him. To this letter, Swamiji added a postscript that seemed vigorous indeed and that breathed of well-being and good spirits: "Hello—Sacred Cow!" And he asked what she was doing off in the forest, so to speak—meditating or counting Mrs. Briggs's pulse?⁸ (Mrs. Isabel L. Briggs was a close friend of Mrs. Bull's, whom he had met in Cambridge.)

In 1967 Swami Vidyatmananda identified the Leggetts' house and supplied a photograph of it in *Prabuddha Bharata* (March 1967). The house, which is today the art gallery "Vision Nouvelle," has since been made available by its owner to the Centre Vedantique-Ramakrichna in Grets for biweekly Paris classes. Thus the French devotees of Swamiji will come to know well the place he lived in during at least a part of his stay in Paris.

It was not a large house, but it was elegant and sophisticated,⁹ a house in the manner of the *belle époque*. It was fairly narrow, had four stories plus an attic, a porte cochere, a large salon on the first floor, and a garden in back. The house was about five minutes' walk from the Bois de Boulogne and about the same distance from the entrance of the Exposition. Writing to her husband in connection with the proposed leasing of the house, Betty Leggett hoped that since the *place* was modern the house would have the comfort of modern plumbing.¹⁰

If Betty Leggett's assumption about the plumbing was correct, Swamiji would have been as pleased as she. Several years earlier he had been dismayed and astonished to find that Paris, "heaven of luxury" though it was, had few bathrooms—even in the "huge palatial hotel" (the Hotel Continental) where he had been Mr. Leggett's guest in September of 1895. "Such hot weather, and no facility for bathing," he had written; "if it continues like this, I shall be in imminent danger of turning mad like a rabid dog."¹¹

Very possibly, however, 6, place des Etats-Unis was no

better equipped with bathrooms than most other "modern" houses in Paris. "[A] queer thing," Dr. Janes reported to his wife, "is that there are no bathrooms in the houses." And in this sweeping statement he did not exclude the Leggetts' house, where; by the time of that writing, he had been a dinner guest. Furthermore, to rely again upon Dr. Janes's observations, the Leggetts' house, like other Parisian houses, was backward in the matter of lighting. Yet another of "the queer things about this very modern city," he wrote in the same letter, "is that everybody burns candles. There is neither gas nor electricity in my room [at M. Nobel's], which is in a modern apartment house. Gas is usually burned in the streets instead of electricity...."¹²

But candlelight was all the more elegant, and the house was a perfect setting for the fashionable and scintillating gatherings that 1900 Paris so delighted in. In the second part of his "Memoirs of European Travel"—to which, as in chapter one, I shall refer as his *Memoirs*—Swamiji wrote (originally in Bengali) of "the daily reunion of numbers of distinguished men and women which Mr. Leggett brought about at an enormous expense in his Parisian mansion, by inviting them to at-homes."¹³

"All types of distinguished personages—poets, philosophers, scientists, moralists, politicians, singers, professors, painters, artists, sculptors, musicians, and so on, of both sexes—used to be assembled in Mr. Leggett's residence, attracted by his hospitality and kindness," he related. "That incessant outflow of words, clear and limpid like a mountain-fall, that expression of sentiments emanating from all sides like sparks of fire, bewitching music, the magic current of thought from master-minds coming into conflict with one another... used to hold all spell-bound, making them forgetful of time and place."¹⁴

Except for Swamiji's unexplained return address "Boulevard Hans Swan" (which, as Swami Vidyatmananda points out, must be a misreading of "Boulevard Haussmann") on a published letter of August 14, it would appear that he made the

HOMeward BOUND

Leggetts' house his headquarters until the first week of September, occupying (for part of the time at least) "the nursery"—the bedroom that had been recently vacated by the Leggetts' little daughter and her governess (both of whom had gone to the seaside in England).¹⁵

Among his old and dear friends at 6, place des Etats-Unis Swamiji would have felt at home. There were Betty and Francis Leggett, Josephine MacLeod, and Alberta. With whom Sister Nivedita was staying at this time is not quite clear from the available records, but she would, in any case, have visited the Leggetts now and then (though, as we shall see, the relations between Swamiji and his disciple at this period were somewhat strained). Indeed, the only close friend from Ridgely Manor days who was missing from the Paris group was Sara Bull, who, as mentioned above, was in Britain.

To what extent Swamiji entered into the Leggetts' sparkling "at-homes" we do not know, but he could not have avoided them altogether; nor, one thinks, would he have wanted to, for talent and brilliance of all sorts was, as he said, represented at these gatherings, and he never failed to appreciate human greatness in whatever form it might appear. And he could, of course, be as sparkling a conversationalist as the most urbane of Parisians, match wits with the cleverest, and defeat in debate the most learned and most intellectual—some of this, perhaps, in the French language, which he had been studying off and on since his early wandering days in India, concentrating on it with some intensity during the past year or so. "Again I am going to learn French," he had written from Ridgely Manor to Mary Hale. "If I fail to do it this year, I cannot 'do' the Paris Exposition next year properly..."¹⁶ He had continued his study in California. "I am sure to meet [Harriet in Paris] and *parler français!*" he had written to Mary Hale from Turk Street. "I am getting by heart a French *dictionnaire!*"¹⁷

But not even Swamiji could have learned to speak fluent French out of a dictionary. Thus we find him in September moving to the Paris flat of a Frenchman named Jules Bois, who

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

spoke no English. Of this move he was to write: "My French—well, it was something quite extraordinary! I had this in mind that the inability to live like a dumb man would naturally force me to talk French, and I would attain fluency in that language in no time."¹⁸ Yet even before settling into the lodging of Jules Bois Swamiji had, as he wrote to Swami Turiyananda on September 1, "somewhat mastered the French language,"¹⁹ and his fluency must have been increasing day by day. One finds that on August 24 he gave a talk "*dans les salons de M. Leggett*," the printed invitation to which is quoted by Swami Vidyatmananda in his *Prabuddha Bharata* article of March 1967. He has translated the invitation as follows:

You are invited, you and your friends, to hear a distinguished scholar, Swami Vivekananda, who plans to explain Hindu religion and philosophy, this coming Friday, August 24, at 4:00 o'clock, at the house of Mr. Leggett,
6 Place des Etats-Unis, Paris²⁰

This invitation does not say, it is true, that Swamiji would give his discourse on "Hindu Religion and Philosophy" in French, but it does, not, on the other hand, say he wouldn't. Further research may settle the point.²¹

Apart from his intimate circle, many of Swamiji's old friends were in Paris that summer. There were, for instance, Sarah Bernhardt, the great actress, whom he had known in New York in 1896; Emma Thursby, the famous concert singer; Jane Addams, the Chicago social worker and settlement founder; Dr. Lewis G. Janes, the social evolutionist; Emma Calvé, the operatic diva; Mrs. Potter Palmer, the social queen of Chicago; Mr. and Mrs. Milward Adams (Florence Adams), also of Chicago; Jagadis Chandra Bose, the great Bengali scientist of whom Swamiji was so proud; and, if nothing had prevented, Harriet Hale (Mrs. Clarence Woolley) and her husband. Miss Sarah Farmer, the founder of Greenacre, was

HOMeward BOUND

somewhere in Europe at this time, visiting various health resorts, as was Professor William James, who dropped into Paris from time to time.

In the city that summer was also Hiram Maxim, the famous, delightful, and somewhat eccentric inventor, who was best known, to his regret, for his rapid-fire machine guns. Mr. Maxim, a vigorous sixty in 1900, had heard Swamiji speak at the Parliament of Religions, had later met him in London, and held him in high esteem. "Maxim," Swamiji was to write in his *Memoirs*, "is an admirer of China and India, and is a good writer on religion and philosophy etc. Having read my works long since, he holds me in great—I should say, excessive—admiration."²² His admiration for Swamiji was indeed great. In the foreword to his book *Li Hung Chang's Scrap-Book* (1913), a documented polemic against Christian missionaries in China, whom, as Swamiji remarked, "he cannot at all bear,"²³ Sir Hiram Maxim (he was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1901) wrote at some length of Swamiji's appearance at the Parliament of Religions. The reader will not mind a digression, I think, to learn with what delight and relief he, like thousands of other Americans, had heard the young Hindu monk in 1893. He wrote as follows:

A few years ago there was a Congress of Religions at Chicago. Many said that such a thing would be impossible. How could any understanding be arrived at where each particular party was absolutely right and all the others were completely in the wrong? Still the Congress saved the American people more than a million dollars a year, not to mention many lives abroad. And this was all brought about by one brave and honest man. When it was announced in Calcutta that there was to be a Congress of religions at Chicago, some of the rich merchants took the Americans at their word, and sent them a Brahmin monk, Viva Kananda, from the oldest monastery in the world. This monk was of commanding presence and vast learning,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

speaking English like a Webster. The American Protestants, who vastly outnumbered all others, imagined that they would have an easy task, and commenced proceedings with the greatest confidence, and with the air of "Just see me wipe you out." However, what they had to say was the old commonplace twaddle that had been mouthed over and over again in every little hamlet from Nova Scotia to California. It interested no one, and no one noticed it.

When, however, Viva Kananda spoke, they saw that they had a Napoleon to deal with. His first speech was no less than a revelation. Every word was eagerly taken down by the reporters, and telegraphed all over the country, where it appeared in thousands of papers. Viva Kananda became the lion of the day. He soon had an immense following. No hall could hold the people who flocked to hear him lecture. They had been sending silly girls and half-educated simpletons of men, and millions of dollars, to Asia for years to convert the poor benighted heathen and save his alleged soul; and here was a specimen of the unsaved who knew more of philosophy and religion than all the parsons and missionaries in the whole country. Religion was presented in an agreeable light for the first time to them. There was more in it than they had ever dreamed; argument was impossible. He played with the parsons as a cat plays with a mouse. They were in a state of consternation. What could they do? What did they do? What they always do—they denounced him as an agent of the devil. But the deed was done; he had sown the seed, and the Americans commenced to think. They said to themselves: "Shall we waste our money in sending missionaries who know nothing of religion, as compared with this man, to teach men as he? No!" And the missionary income fell off more than a million dollars a year in consequence.²⁴

(One might mention in passing that Mr. Leggett appears to have been among those Americans who had stopped

contributing to the missionaries after knowing Swamiji. According to Mrs. Hansbrough, Swamiji had once said, "When I exposed the missionaries, Mr. Leggett stopped giving his ten thousand dollars a year to them. But," he had added, laughing, "he did not then give it to me!")²⁵

Among the old friends Swamiji met again in Paris was the amazing Mrs. Melton, the magnetic healer, whom the Leggetts had brought from California to New York and thence to Europe. Mrs. Melton, one finds, was now known as "Mrs. Waldon" or "Mrs. Weldon." (Whether this change of name was due to a change of husbands or to a misreading of hand-writings—a scrawled "Melton" looking much like "Weldon" or "Waldon"—I do not know. In any case, I shall continue to refer to her by the name she bore when Swamiji was first flayed by her treatments in Los Angeles.) In a sensational article, from which I shall have occasion to quote at some length in a later section, the *New York World* of November 11, 1900, mentions the Leggetts' household in Paris and includes in its wild and unpleasantly humorous story an account of the magnetic healer. This portion of the article reads:

All last summer the Leggetts were in Paris. They hired Lady Cunard's house [The house did not belong to Lady Cunard, though she was a close friend of Betty Leggett's.] and spent a great deal of money in entertaining.

Mrs. Weldon [Melton] is a remarkable character. She is a Southern woman of refined appearance, but professes to be unable to read or write. Although she shows no trace of negro origin she speaks in a negro dialect. An American woman tells how, having sought to make an appointment with the "healer" by letter and having afterward spoken to her about it, Mrs. Weldon said:

"Lor' bless yo', honey, I caint read ner write. Yo' jess speak to Mis' Leggett ef yo' wunter see me."

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

That was the cue at all times. Only through Mrs. Leggett could the "healer" be approached....

In Paris Swamiji surely met many other old friends whose names have not come down to us, for tens of millions of people from America, England, other parts of Europe, and even from India crowded into the French capital that summer of the International Exposition.²⁶ And he of course made many new friends of all types and classes, as he always did wherever he went. In *Prophets of the New India* Romain Rolland regrets that "only Father Hyacinthe and Jules Bois [of both of whom more later] should have been the guides of so penetrating a spectator of the moral life of the West in Paris in his researches into the mind of France."²⁷ But certainly during his stay of almost three months in France so penetrating a spectator as Swamiji discovered much more of the French mind and morals than was represented by the young Jules Bois or the aged Père Hyacinthe. Surely he talked with other Frenchmen, meeting them both at the Leggetts' "at-homes" and on his own. We know, for instance, that the young Duke of Richelieu became much attached to him and visited him frequently; and from a letter of Alberta Sturges to her aunt Miss MacLeod (written on September 11) we learn that Swamiji was meeting the artists and thinkers of Paris—the sculptor Auguste Rodin, among others. From Alberta we learn also that he intended on September 13 to visit in the country a noted painter, whom, regrettably, she did not name.²⁸ Indeed, one regrets Alberta's general reticence in regard to names: Paris was then ablaze with artists and thinkers. To name a very few, there were the authors Émile Zola, Anatole France, Joris Huysmans, Pierre Loti, Jules Lemaître, the dramatist Edmond Rostand, the philosopher Henri Bergson. Among painters there were the academic Leon Bonnat and Adolphe Bouguereau; the more modern Impressionists Pissarro, Redon, and Claude Monet, the last of whom lived in the country some forty miles from Paris. There were the composers Saint-Saëns and Massenet,

and, about to become famous, Claude Debussy and the young Maurice Ravel. Then, effervescing in the studios and cafes of Montmartre were the exuberant group of young men who, still generally unknown, were changing the whole trend of art—seeking out new and presumably deeper meanings and creating subtler and more plastic forms; the old conventions and rigidities were being joyously shattered to bits. These were the young men—among them Matisse, Braque, Derain, Vlaminck, and the older but not less unconventional Henri Rousseau—who in five years would exhibit their work and be named by an incensed and jeering public *les fauves*, “the wild beasts.” It is not impossible that Swamiji met such artists of the avant-garde through Jules Bois, who may have had entrée to their studios, though he was not, it would seem, one of them.

Yet even if Swamiji did not step into the bohemia where twentieth-century art was being born, he was, as Alberta said, “meeting all the artists and thinkers,” and thus he could not have avoided talking with many Frenchmen of distinguished minds—of brilliance, learning, wit, even of depth. Nor, whom-ever he knew or did not know, would he have failed to plumb the mind and mood of France. An expression in the eyes, a casual remark, a gesture could be to him more revealing of the qualities of a person’s or of a people’s thought and character than long and intimate association would be to an ordinary judge. That he did not find the fin-de-siècle French mind particularly profound was not, one thinks, due to a limited acquaintance with it. Beneath the delightful sparkle on the surface, which he much appreciated (“The countenance of French genius, even when frowning in anger, is beautiful,” he wrote), beneath that limpid elegance and charm, the waters, he found, were on the whole not deep.²⁹ “The people of France,” he wrote on September 1 to Swami Turiyananda, “are mere intellectualists, they run after worldly things and firmly believe God and souls to be superstitions; they are extremely loath to talk on such subjects. This is a truly materialistic country! Let

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

me see what the Lord does. But this country is at the head of Western culture and Paris is the capital of that culture.”³⁰

Just as Paris was (as Swamiji said) the “center of the civilized world,”³¹ so the year 1900, which closed one century and opened another, was a peak in time. It was electric with the sense of change, a sense half of foreboding, half of optimism. The world stood poised for a plunge into the era for which Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda had come—an era vastly different in all respects from any that had gone before.

Even the difference between 1893 and 1900—the years, respectively, of the Chicago World’s Fair and of the Paris Exposition—was startling. “In these seven years,” Henry Adams observed, “man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old.” Adams, a visitor to the Paris Exposition, had been duly impressed by the dynamos, but he was awed by the exhibits centering around the recent discovery of X-rays, which, he rightly sensed, bespoke a new force commensurate in magnitude and effect only with some tremendous metaphysical energy.³² Mankind, there is no question, was on the eve of a new universe, a new era, whose nature was foretold as distinctly perhaps by Vickers-Maxim’s vast exhibit of modern guns as by the wonders of X-rays and radium—those first hints of the inconceivably immense power within a speck of dust.

The exposition stretched over more than 275 acres (some historians say 550) in the heart of Paris. Its temporary buildings, sitting in the shadow of the eleven-year-old Eiffel Tower, were as rococo as lace valentines. Fashionably dressed men and women (the latter holding parasols) strolled along wide boulevards from one resplendent “palace” to another, marveling at their many displays of science and technology. “The grounds are more beautiful than I expected,” Dr. Janes allowed in a letter to his wife. “There is more vegetation than in Chicago, and though the arrangement of the buildings is not so imposing, the general effect is very beautiful.”³³ A day or two later he

HOMeward BOUND

again conceded that "some of the buildings are very beautiful." "But," he went on, "the general effect is less imposing than in Chicago. There is more color, and trees and foliage on the grounds add to the beauty, but we miss the Lake and the noble architectural effect of the buildings. There is more 'gingerbread' work here—less simplicity and harmony. The two permanent art-palaces are very fine, however, and also the new Alexander III bridge across the Seine."³⁴

Every morning Swamiji went to the Exposition with Alberta, Mr. Leggett, and Professor Patrick Geddes, the last of whom explained the various exhibits.³⁵ It was Alberta who remembered those morning trips to the Fair, but, as far as I know, no one thought to wring from her memory every drop about Swamiji—how he looked, where he went, what he said. We can only guess that he did not pass through all those "palaces," pregnant as they were with the twentieth century, without comment. We can guess, too, what he must have done: he must have seen all the exhibits worth seeing; he must have circumambulated the grounds on the moving sidewalk; he must have often lunched at one or another of the national pavilions; and in the evenings he must, at least once, have viewed "the Illumination." This last, which was not to be missed, consisted of multicolored lights that magically played and shimmered on the soaring fountains and cascading waters in the front court of the Palace of Electricity, a building which epitomized progress and which, fittingly enough (for electric power was an infant still), looked a good deal more like an elaborately frilled bassinet than a dynamo. In short, Swamiji must have "done" the Paris Exposition—himself something to see as he walked through the "palaces" looking, it was remarked, like a prince. And if we do not know what he said of the Exposition at the time, we do know that he wrote of it (in his Bengali "Memoirs of European Travel") as "this accumulated mass of dazzling ideas, like lightning held steady as it were, this unique assemblage of celestial panorama on earth!"³⁶

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Of Swamiji's many tours through the Exposition, only one brief story has come down to us through the reminiscences of Swami Turiyananda, as published in the *Udbodhan*. The incident was originally told, of course, by Swamiji. One day when he was walking through the Exposition grounds, he saw a young woman whose face was arrestingly beautiful. He turned to look at her in admiration, but even as he did so, her exquisite features became in his eyes metamorphosed into those of a grimacing monkey, as repulsive as they had been attractive.³⁷

The "celestial panorama on earth" could hold no temptations for Swamiji; his eyes, the perfect servants of his renunciation, saw through beauty to the bone. And all the while, in the hubbub that swirled around him, he drifted still in "the will-current of the Mother," waiting Her command, not certain of his next move.³⁸ "[Mother] knows best what She wants to have done," he wrote to Swami Turiyananda on September 1, 1900. "She never speaks out, 'only keeps mum.' But this much I notice that for a month or so I have been having intense meditation and repetition of the Lord's name."³⁹

Who can say what heights of experience Swamiji meant by the word "intense"! Yet he did not remain aloof from the activity surrounding him. He went, as we have seen, to the Exposition every morning; he attended at least some of the Leggetts' "at-homes"; to judge from his *Memoirs*, he went to the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt to see "the divine Sarah" in *l'Aiglon*; he perhaps went to the opera as well; he visited the galleries of the Louvre.

In *Prabuddha Bharata* of March 1927 one finds a brief but vivid glimpse of Swamiji during a sight-seeing excursion in Paris. "I see him now," the friend who had been with him wrote years later to the editor of the magazine, "leaning over and looking down upon Napoleon's tomb and saying, 'A great man, a great force! Siva! Siva!'" (This same correspondent recalled another sight-seeing incident that had taken place in Saint Peter's in Rome. But it could as well, one thinks, have occurred in Notre Dame, which almost unquestionably

Swamiji visited. "At St. Peter's," his friend related, "...he said, 'This is splendid!' And when I said, amazed, 'You, Swamiji, like all this ceremony?' he replied, 'If you love a personal God, then give Him all your best incense, flowers, jewels and silk. There is nothing good enough.' A great wonder it was, knowing Swamiji.")⁴⁰

He went to see great people as well as great sights—indeed, as he said, he far preferred the former. One great man whom we know he went out of his way to meet in Paris was Père Hyacinthe. From a letter written in the last part of August by Emma Thursby to her sister Ina, one learns that Swamiji called upon the aged ex-monk earlier in that month. (To judge from recent findings made by Swami Vidyatmananda, the date was very likely August 10.)⁴¹ "I took Mrs. Jackson to Pere Hyacinthe's," Miss Thursby wrote, "where the Swami was to meet him there for the first [time]. It was very interesting and Mrs. Jackson was delighted with the Swami. He gave a talk at the Exposition."⁴² From those three simple sentences one learns quite a lot. But first about Père Hyacinthe.

He and Swamiji got along famously and continued to see each other. Swamiji devoted many lines to him in his *Memoirs*, telling part of his history and describing him as "very affable in speech, modest, and of a distinctly devotional turn of mind." The "very aged" man (he was seventy-three in 1900) had been a monk "of a strict ascetic section of the Roman Catholic Church"—the Order of the Discalced Carmelites. He had been extremely famous in France as a preacher, his eloquence, his erudition, and his manifest austerity and devotion drawing large crowds to his sermons in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. But his orthodoxy was not all that could be desired by the Church, and he was watched and rebuked by the authorities. Their worst suspicions were confirmed when in 1870 he associated himself with those who vehemently protested the doctrine of papal infallibility, which had been affirmed in July of that year at the First Vatican Council. He was excommunicated for this intransigence. A little later, he broke with the Roman

Catholic church altogether and took to a lay life. He went to Geneva and then to London, where in 1872 he married an American woman. He then, with his wife, settled in Paris, where he founded an Old Catholic church. ("Old Catholic" was the designation assumed by those Roman Catholics who had refused to accept the dogma of papal infallibility. Their church was, in fact, a part of the Jansenist church in Holland, which had existed for 150 years independent of the Papacy.)

Although Père Hyacinthe—now plain Monsieur Charles Loyson—had no longer been a monk when he had married, nor a Roman Catholic priest, his marriage had nonetheless created a sensation in France. In the eyes of thousands of the orthodox devout he had still been the great ascetic preacher who had taken vows of lifelong celibacy. He might defy the Pope; but never should he break his vows. As Swamiji wrote: "The Protestants received him with honour, but the Catholics began to hate him. . . . They hate the very sight of a married priest; no Catholic would ever tolerate the preaching of religion by a man with family." They blamed the woman behind the deed. "All French people, of both sexes," Swamiji reported, "lay the whole blame on the wife; they say, 'That woman has spoilt one of our great ascetic monks.' Madame Loyson is really in a sorry predicament—specially as they live in Paris, in a Catholic country."

Madame Loyson appears to have been an ambitious, somewhat overzealous woman, who saw in her husband a reformer of the Catholic church and in herself his prophetess. "[She] had perhaps seen many visions that Loyson might possibly turn out to be a second Martin Luther, and overthrow the Pope's throne—into the Mediterranean," Swamiji wrote. "But nothing of the kind took place; and the only result was, as the French say, that he was placed between two stools. But Madame Loyson still cherishes her curious daydreams." She did not, perhaps, care much for Swamiji; he and her husband, whom Swamiji always called by his old, priestly name, Père Hyacinthe, would engage in lengthy talks about

HOMEWARD BOUND

"various religions and creeds." "When I discuss with the old man such topics as renunciation and monasticism etc.," Swamiji wrote, "all those long-cherished sentiments wake up in his aged breast, and his wife most probably smarts all the while." Yet Swamiji had no censure for the old man or his marriage. "I hear all and keep silent," he wrote. "...old Père Hyacinthe is a really sweet-natured and peaceful man, he is happy with his wife and family—and what can the whole French people have to say against this?"⁴³

To return to Miss Thursby's letter to her sister Ina—she writes that Mrs. Jackson was delighted with Swamiji, whom she met at Père Hyacinthe's. This was Mrs. James Jackson, an old friend of Miss Thursby's who had lived in Paris for many years at 15, avenue d'Antin—a house that has been described in *The Life of Emma Thursby* by Richard M. Gipson as palatial. There, in earlier years, she had held salons and musicales, to which had come people not only of fashion but of fame: artists, musicians, writers. Mrs. Jackson was, it would seem, something of an artist herself, now and then enclosing in her letters to Miss Thursby small colored drawings from her own hand. Her delight in Swamiji leads one to suppose that she extended her hospitality to him and introduced him to a number of her illustrious friends.

Miss Thursby's letter also discloses another facet of Swamiji's Paris life. "He gave a talk at the Exposition," she wrote.⁴⁴ Since it seems certain that this letter was written in August, at least a week (possibly two weeks) before Swamiji spoke at the Congress of the History of Religions on September 7, it seems equally certain that his "talk at the Exposition" was a separate lecture. As for details regarding it, one can only guess, at the present writing, that he spoke under the auspices of the International Association for the Advancement of Science, Arts and Education, a section of the Paris Exposition, of which Professor Patrick Geddes was the Secretary of both the British Group and the American Group and Mr. Francis H. Leggett the Treasurer of the American Group. One must

wait for further research to confirm or reject this guess and to bring to light further information. In the meanwhile, it can be said that Swamiji, as usual, filled his days with more activity than has been known.

Of the many and various parties and gatherings that he no doubt attended during his stay in France, we know at present (or at least we think we know) only of one, and this from a most wonderful letter he wrote to Betty Leggett. The party, clearly, was not an "at-home": rather, it was an informal gathering of intimate friends, among whom were Josephine MacLeod, "Dr. James" [Dr. Lewis G. Janes?], Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Geddes, Mrs. Ole Bull, and Sister Nivedita. In the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, who had gone to Kreuznach, a health resort in Germany, for a nonmagnetic treatment of Betty Leggett's leg, Joe was hostess, and this was the kind of informal party that she, unlike her sister, was apt to give. Swamiji's letter to Betty Leggett was dated September 3 and written the day after the party. ("I hear you are having an easy time the last week or so," he wrote in a heretofore unpublished passage.⁴⁵ "We are not to be out-done—so we intended to have a better time yesterday. We had a congress of cranks here in this house.") He went on to parody, without the slightest malice but with the incisive selectivity of a master mimic or caricaturist, the foibles and idiosyncrasies of some of those present at the "congress." There was, for instance, Mrs. Bull earnestly explaining how the only panacea for all the difficulties in the world "was a right understanding of the proper persons, and then to find liberty in love and freedom in liberty and motherhood, brotherhood, fatherhood, Godhood, love in freedom and freedom in love, in the right holding up of the true ideal in sex"⁴⁶—a passage which could almost have come from one of her own letters. (A serene confusion and roundaboutness seems to have been a marked characteristic of Mrs. Bull's. On his third day in Paris, Dr. Janes wrote with sly humor to his wife: "I think I can already find my way about better than Mrs. Bull, who took us by very

HÔMEWARD BOUND

round-about ways from her rooms to ours, and to the Exposition yesterday morning.")⁴⁷

There was Sister Nivedita proclaiming, "It is chutney, chutney and Kali [Bengal chutney to be made and sold by her Hindu widows and girls; and Kali, the Divine Mother, of whom she was forever talking to startled Westerners], that will remove all difficulties of life, and make it easy for us to swallow all the evils, and relish what is good." Swamiji did not rest here in poking fun at his fervent disciple. "She stopped all of a sudden," he went on, "and vehemently asserted that she was not going to speak any further, as she had been obstructed by a certain male animal in the audience in her speech. She was sure one man in the audience had his head turned towards the window and was not paying the attention proper to a lady, and though as to herself she believed in the equality of the sexes, yet she wanted to know the reason of that disgusting man's want of due respect for women. Then one and all declared that they had been giving her the most undivided attention, and all above the equal right, her due, but to no purpose. Margot would have nothing to do with that horrible crowd and sat down."

Then there was Patrick Geddes, to whose sociological theories and writings Nivedita had earlier in the summer devoted her time and energy. Swamiji had him spinning out as *his* panacea for the world's ills one of his complicated and semi-mystical "sequences," as Geddes called them. "The Scotch delegate vehemently objected [to Mrs. Bull's solution]," Swamiji wrote, "and said that as the hunter chased the goatherd, the goatherd the shepherd, the shepherd the peasant and the peasant drove the fisher into the sea, now, we wanted to fish out of the deep the fisher and let him fall upon the peasant, the peasant upon the shepherd and so on; and the web of life will be completed and we will be all happy."⁴⁸

The "Dr. James" of this letter (as published) is, I venture to say, almost certainly Dr. Lewis G. Janes, and not Professor William James, as has been thought. There are several

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

reasons for my belief. First, the gentleman in question was, Swamiji wrote, “entirely occupied with the evolution of Meltonian blisters.”⁴⁹ Dr. Lewis G. Janes, who was an ardent evolutionist, thus giving the point to Swamiji’s turn of phrase, was currently a victim of the magnetic ministrations of Mrs. Melton. His diary for the preceding week reads:

Aug. 28 secured diagnosis and treatment from Mrs. Walden [Melton].

Aug. 29 second treatment. Very powerful and ought to be effective.

Aug. 30 Went for treatment after breakfast and received

HOMeward BOUND

"Dr. James") had at one time been a guest at the Leggetts' house. He had also suffered Mrs. Melton's cure, making him look like an American flag (he had written to Mrs. Bull) and begetting in him a slight feverishness.⁵³ But this he had written a month or so earlier from Ostend, Belgium, where, as one learns from a letter of Miss Thursby's, Mrs. Melton was staying "with some patients,"⁵⁴ and it does not seem likely that the Professor would twice undergo the harrowing experience of her treatments—even if he had been in Paris at the beginning of September.

But however that may be, the "congress of cranks" ended, Swamiji reported, in "a confusion of voices" with everyone on his feet vehemently upholding his own panacea until practical Joe, who had been playing the role of spectator the while, threatened "to be the hunter for the time and chase them all out of the house if they did not stop their nonsense." "Then was peace and calm restored," Swamiji concluded, "and I hasten to write you about it."⁵⁵

In this conclusion one finds a revealing comment upon the absent Betty Leggett herself, for no one who had not a keen sense of humor could have called forth this gem of a letter. There was more to it than I have here mentioned, but, originally supplied by Mrs. Frances Leggett, it has been published first in *Vedanta and the West* (November-December 1953), later in volume six of the *Complete Works* (1956), and again, with commentary, in Swami Vidyatmananda's article in *Prabuddha Bharata* (March 1967). The reader can readily find the text.

But before leaving this much-published letter one thing more should here be said and a question asked. Its date, September 3, poses something of a problem, for there exist two other letters bearing this same date; one is from Mrs. Bull to Miss Emma Thursby,⁵⁶ and the other is from Sister Nivedita to Miss MacLeod.⁵⁷ Both are written from Brittany. Mrs. Bull's letter makes no mention of her having been in Paris the day before; on the contrary, she writes that she and Sister Nivedita had just returned to Perros-Guirec (on the evening of September 1)

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

from a visit to Guingamp, an old sight-worthy Breton town. In Nivedita's letter to Miss MacLeod it is clear that the two had not seen each other for some time and did not plan to do so until the latter came to Brittany. Again, in a letter Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod from Guingamp on September 1 nothing is said of an imminent visit to Paris. Could the date on Swamiji's letter have been incorrect? Possibly; but another date would not help us, for there seems to have been no day in August, September, or October of 1900 on which all the guests of the "cranks' congress" were in Paris. Mrs. Bull, for instance, had left Paris for Brittany on July 21. All available records tend to show that she did not return even for a day before Nivedita followed her in late August. And Nivedita did not return at all. Might we not think, then, that the entire gathering was invented by Swamiji from start to finish, that it was pure and wonderful parody, devised solely for the entertainment of Betty Leggett, who, exiled in a German health resort, was much in need of cheering and who would certainly have understood the fun?

2

Assuming the date of Swamiji's letter to Betty Leggett was correct, he was evidently still living at the Leggetts' house on September 3, but within a week—the exact day is not known—he moved to the lodgings of Jules Bois. (According to Miss MacLeod's memory, Swamiji "stayed some weeks [at 6, place des Etats-Unis] until he went to stay with Mr. Gerald Nobel, a bachelor."¹ Perhaps Swamiji did indeed stay again with M. Nobel for a few days at the end of August or the beginning of September, but there is, to my knowledge, nothing to bear this out. From the material available to us at present it would appear, in fact, that he moved directly from the Leggetts' to Jules Bois.)

"Yesterday," Swamiji wrote in a letter of September 1 to Swami Turiyananda, "I went to see the house of the gentleman

HOMeward BOUND

with whom I shall stay. He is a poor scholar, has his room filled with books and lives in a flat on the fifth floor. And as there are no lifts in this country as in America, one has to climb up and down. But it is no longer trying to me." Swamiji's dream of "settling down somewhere and spending my time among books" was at last being realized—at least for the moment. And one can imagine that after the continual festivities at the Leggetts' he looked forward to the relative obscurity and quiet of a fifth-floor flat. "There is a beautiful public park round the house," he continued in his letter. "The gentleman cannot speak English; that is a further reason for my going. I shall have to speak French perforce. It is all Mother's will. . . ."²

Jules Bois (whose name one is today hard put to find in histories or encyclopedias) was in 1900 enjoying a certain fame as a writer. His best known book, which had been first published in 1895 when he was twenty-four (a second edition had come out two years later), was a scholarly work of more than four hundred pages entitled *Le Satanisme et la magie, avec une étude de J. K. Huysmans*. (Joris Karl Huysmans, the famous French novelist, was a typical "décadent"—a term applied to a school of French writers for their leanings toward the hyperesthetic.) Before 1900, M. Bois had also written, among other things, a dramatic sketch in verse entitled *Les Noces de Satan*; a novel, *L'Éternelle Poupée*; and a fairly large and well-selling work, *L'Au-delà et les forces inconnues* ("The next world and unknown forces").

Jules Bois's interests clearly ran to the occult, a not unusual preoccupation in late-nineteenth-century France, and his fascination with unknown forces extended to—or possibly was an extension of—an interest in metaphysics and religion. "Up to [the time I met Swami Vivekananda] in Paris and London, not as a dilettante but as an earnest explorer of the unknown, I had associated with Brahmans, Buddhists, pundits, and deified sannyasins," M. Bois was to write in an article on the Hindu Cults, which appeared in March of 1927 in the then well-known American magazine, the *Forum*. (The article was

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

the fifth in a series Bois was writing on "The New Religions of America.") His early interest in religion had led him to follow the debates of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago through contemporary journals. "One declaration which arrested my attention," he wrote in the same article, "was that of the young Hindu prophet promulgating a 'universal religion'. Though profound, his address was beautifully incisive,—a refreshing contrast to the usual pronouncements of that kind, which are apt to be gelatinous. These sentences bore the stamp of genius, and they dwelt in my mind until the day when I received an invitation to meet the swami himself at the home of a rich American friend in Paris."³

This rich American friend was almost certainly either Francis or Betty Leggett, the latter of whom M. Bois may have met during one of her earlier trips abroad. The occasion to which Bois was invited may have been Swamiji's discourse on "Hindu Religion and Philosophy," which, as we have seen, took place on August 24. Recounting his first meeting with Swamiji, M. Bois continues:

After an informal conference Vivekananda approached me as though we had known each other for a long time. A brief conversation followed, at the end of which he startled me by proposing to come and live with me. Expressing my sense of the honor his suggestion implied, I reminded him of the luxury and attention he was enjoying and explained that I was only a young writer who could offer him very little in the way of comfort.

"I am a monk and a mendicant," was his reply. "I can sleep on the ground or on the floor. Our luxury will be the wisdom of the masters. I will bring my pipe with me, and upon its incense will rise the verses of the Vedas and Upanishads."⁴

It is unlikely that Swamiji uttered that last sentence, but it was true indeed that the comfort and luxury of a Parisian

HOMeward BOUND

house such as the Leggetts' and the discomforts and inconveniences of a poor flat such as that of Jules Bois were to him equally welcome.

"The next day," M. Bois went on, slightly distorting the facts, "the swami arrived with a small valise." According to Swamiji, he first went to Bois's flat on August 31 and this, as he wrote to Swami Turiyananda, only to see the place, not to stay there.⁵ But however that may be, it was probably only a matter of a few days before he moved in with the young Frenchman. And there he lived for at least four weeks in all, surrounded by books, in an atmosphere of study, often left to himself for long hours of unbroken quiet.

In his *Forum* article, Jules Bois gives a picture of Swamiji during those weeks, and although he casts a mist of poetry over his remembered friendship with the Hindu monk, one can, I believe, catch through that mist a glimpse of Swamiji himself, his presence solid, immense.

At that time [Bois wrote] I was living in the rue Gazan, facing the Parc Montsouris. There, far from the hum and drum of the city, the days flowed by in unbroken calm and a quasi-solitude. From the balcony one looked out over a miniature Switzerland of hills, valleys, and artificial lakes bathed in radiant sunlight. At the close of the day, after having attended to my own affairs, I would find Vivekananda there, scarcely having moved from the spot where I had left him, but having smoked and meditated much. This monk of Shiva had gone up and down the earth, preaching his alluring but terrible gospel, proclaiming the illusion of the external world and our personality, and the reality of one single Being behind the multiform appearance of things and creatures. Marvelous evenings in the pure intoxication of metaphysics and nature! The perfume of young flowers and the grave Hindu plain-song; a Parisian spring and a breeze from the Ganges; the semi-obscure glamour of the stars, while the messenger of

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

the old Barattha [Bharata], with his dark nimbus of hair, his imposing carriage, his prominent eyes now widely open, now veiled by heavy lids, sat like a Buddha of the Himalayas transported to a suburb on the Seine. It was not the India of the fakirs and the cranks, but the magical land of beauty and wisdom. And the five yogas, transmitted from time immemorial by the *guru* (master) to the *chela* (disciple) revealed once more, this time to a young French poet, their methods for the experimental union of the individual with himself first and then with the divine.⁶

Swamiji was evidently fond of this young French poet. He stayed with him (as far as we know at present) through most of September and October, took him along to Brittany and later included him in the party that toured through southern Europe and the Near East. In his memoirs of that trip he wrote in praise of the young Frenchman. "Monsieur Jules Bois is a famous writer; he is particularly an adept in the discovery of historical truths in the different religions and superstitions. He has written a famous book putting into historical form the devil-worship, sorcery, necromancy, incantation, and such other rites that were in vogue in Mediaeval Europe and the traces of them that obtain to this day. He is a good poet, and is an advocate of the Indian Vedantic ideas that have crept into the great French poets, such as Victor Hugo and Lamartine, and others, and the great German poets, such as Goethe, Schiller, and the rest. The influence of Vedanta on European poetry and philosophy is very great.... M. Jules Bois is very modest and gentle, and though a man of ordinary means, he very cordially received me as a guest into his house in Paris."⁷

To jump ahead of our present story, Swamiji was delighted to have an opportunity to repay M. Bois's hospitality in February of 1901. "I am ever so glad to hear that Bois is coming to Calcutta. Send him immediately to the Math," he wrote to Josephine MacLeod, who was at the time in India. "I will be here. If possible I will keep him here for a few days and

then let him go again to Nepal.”⁸ Four months later Swamiji again mentions his friend. “Jules Bois went as far as Lahore, being prevented from entering Nepal,” he wrote to Joe. “I learn from the papers that he could not bear the heat and fell ill; then he took ship *et bon voyage*. He did not write me a single line since we met in the Math.”⁹ That is all. One does not hear again of Jules Bois in Swamiji’s published letters.

M. Bois, however, wrote about his visit to Belur Math in a chapter (“L’Exstase”) of his book on India, *Visions de l’Inde*, published in Paris in 1903. There is not much of interest in this chapter (which one can find in translation in *Prabuddha Bharata* of March 1918), particularly as one suspects that the author tended to sacrifice fact to fancy. For instance, he quotes a sannyasin (or brahmacharin) of the Math, who had offered him some betel leaf, as having said with a smile: “Narcotics are smoked or chewed all over India. For us, life is a dream and what you call dream among yourselves is for us the sole reality....”¹⁰ Such hazy notions of Indian philosophy are sprinkled throughout Jules Bois’s chapter, giving it, to be sure, a dreamlike quality. Yet in those days Eastern philosophy as he had understood it was to him far superior in depth and wisdom to the “brutalising dream” of the West, and his admiration for Swamiji was genuine. “He incarnated for me—with his genius and his perilous frenzy—,” he wrote in this same chapter, “that India which I cherish as the Fatherland of my dreams—the Eden where lives the Ideal.”¹¹

One is thus surprised to read at the close of his 1927 *Forum* article a repudiation of Vedanta and an affirmation of the Christian religion he had learned at his mother’s knee and which, as he declared elsewhere in this article, had “passed beyond [oriental creeds and forms].” His appreciation of Swamiji was now left-handed:

To Vivekananda I owe much in human enlightenment [he wrote]. In his company for months I enjoyed the unique privilege of having met in one man something

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and perhaps of Buddha himself. To him I am indebted, by contrast, for a deeper adoration of the Christian truth. In the efforts we made together to tear away, by the mere force of mind, the unliftable veil, I became convinced of the futility and insufficiency of human reason confronting the absolute. Despair is at the end of Stoicism, however heroic it may be. The early teaching which my mother whispered to me stood out as holding more practical wisdom, in its impulses of simple faith and homely love, than all the dicta of the greatest sages.¹²

So much for Jules Bois. We need not enter here into a discussion of the religious views he held in his middle age and aired in his *Forum* article. Those pronouncements were thoroughly examined and demolished in an editorial that appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata* of May 1927—an article the interested reader will find under the title “A French Critic on the Vedanta Movement.” All that really concerns us at the present point in our story is that in the autumn of 1900 Jules Bois, then young and idealistic, filled Swamiji’s need for a quiet, book-lined room and a restful atmosphere. Swamiji for his part satisfied the young man’s long-held desire to know him.

Swamiji may have been already settled in M. Bois’s fifth-floor flat when he spoke at the Congress of the History of Religions on the morning of Friday, September 7. This Congress was an affair of six days only (September 3 through September 8) and was not at all comparable to the momentous and renowned Parliament of Religions that had been held in Chicago seven years earlier. “The Chicago Parliament of Religions was a grand affair,” Swamiji pointed out in a Bengali letter to the *Udbodhan*, “and the representatives of many religious sects from all parts of the world were present at it. This Congress, on the other hand, was attended only by such scholars as devote themselves to the study of the origin and the history of different

religions....At the Chicago Parliament...the Roman Catholics expected to establish their superiority over the Protestants without much opposition;...they hoped to make firm their own position. But the result proving otherwise,...the Roman Catholics are now particularly opposed to the repetition of any such gathering. France is a Roman Catholic country; hence, in spite of the earnest wish of the authorities, no religious congress was convened on account of the vehement opposition on the part of the Roman Catholic world.”¹³ In his *Prophets of the New India* Romain Rolland echoes Swamiji’s account. “This was no Parliament of Religions as at Chicago,” he writes. “The Catholic power would not have allowed it. It was purely a historical and scientific Congress. At the point of liberation at which Vivekananda’s life had arrived,” he added, “his intellectual interest, but not his true passion or entire being, could find nourishment in it.”¹⁴

As Swami Vidyatmananda has brought to light in his informative article “Vivekananda at the Paris Congress, 1900” (*Prabuddha Bharata*, March, April 1969), Swamiji’s talk at the Congress was given at a sectional meeting held in the Sorbonne at the School of Higher Studies in one or another of the four or five small rooms of the Department of Historical and Philological Sciences. He spoke twice that morning of September 7, both times in rebuttal of the misinformed pedantry of two of the Western speakers—professors both.

In his first talk, Swamiji explained the nonphallic, Vedic, and Buddhistic origins of the Shiva-Linga and the Shalagrama-Shila (symbols of Hindu worship into which Western scholars persistently read anatomical significance).

In his second talk, he dwelt “on the historic evolution of the religious ideas in India,”¹⁵ spiritedly upholding the conclusions of Indian scholars over those of Western scholars in regard to things Indian.

Whether Swamiji spoke in French or in English is not known; nor do we know to what extent he persuaded the learned gentlemen of the Congress. Almost certainly, however,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

he spoke in English, and very probably many of his listeners went on thinking much as they had always thought. In his letter to the *Udbodhan* he wryly remarked at its close:

“After the lecture, many present . . . assured the Swami that the old days of Sanskrit Antiquarianism were past and gone. The views of modern Sanskrit scholars were largely the same as those of the Swami’s, they said. They believed also, that there was much true history in the Puranas and the traditions of India. Lastly, the learned President, admitting all other points of the Swami’s lecture, disagreed on one point only, namely, on the contemporaneousness of the Gita with the Mahabharata. But the only reason he adduced was that the Western scholars were mostly of the opinion that the Gita was not a part of the Mahabharata.”¹⁶ (In connection with this sort of thinking on the part of both Westerners and Hindus Swamiji had once remarked with the biting sarcasm of which he was past master, “Without the sanction of the European how can Krishna live? He cannot! . . . What [texts] the Europeans do not want must be thrown off. They are interpolations!”)¹⁷

The Paris summer was drawing to an end; the American contingent was disappearing. Immediately after the Congress, Dr. Janes left France to visit Herbert Spencer in Brighton, England. (Almost exactly a year later, Dr. Janes was to die suddenly—and unseasonably, for he was not an elderly man—at Greenacre, Maine. His last words, it is said, were, “It is a beautiful world,”¹⁸ and one did not know if this was a memory of a life well spent or a prevision of a life to come.) Mr. and Mrs. Leggett were still in Germany. On September 6 or 7 (Mrs. Bull wrote to Miss Thursby) Miss MacLeod was expected in Brittany—specifically, in the little fishing village of Perros-Guirec near Lannion, where Mrs. Bull had taken a house (or houses).

With the departure of her aunt, Alberta Sturges became hostess at Number 6, place des Etats-Unis. Twenty-one years

HOMeward BOUND

old, she was attractive, blessed with a happy and open disposition, ready to see good in everyone, learning to see the bad with charity and love. "Life is full of inherent joy and sorrow—and each mail brings me some new story of the one or the other," she was to write to Mrs. Bull in December of 1900. "I think this world is so full of grief and happiness that there is only room for affection in it now. So I am trying to love everything—even what until now I haven't liked. Everything lies in the way one looks at things—doesn't it? So the quicker we put kindly spectacles on the better." Alberta's spectacles were sunny as well as kindly. "My life is such a happy one," she wrote to Mrs. Bull a month or so later, "that one plan and delight only gives precedence to a better one."¹⁹

Now, joyously, all on her own, Alberta gave a small, candle-lit dinner at her parents' house on September 10. The guests, as one learns from a letter she wrote to her mother, were Swamiji, the Duke of Newcastle, his sister Princess Doria, and a Lady Anglesey. This elegant little dinner was a great success. The next day Alberta wrote to her Aunt Joe ("Tante" she called her) that Swamiji had been in a splendid mood and as jolly as could be.²⁰ Swamiji's festive mood, with its unfailing magic, was, of course, the making of the evening. To her mother Alberta reported that everyone had had a lovely time, that the Duke of Newcastle had asked questions of Swamiji, responding to him with interest and sympathy, and that because of this the princess has been radiant.²¹

Under the impression that Swamiji was in a mood to enjoy the effervescent cultural and intellectual life of Paris, Alberta regretted a call that had come to him from Brittany. In her letter of September 11 to Miss MacLeod she reproached "Tante" for having asked him to the provinces. Swamiji, too, seemed loath to go. All in a breath, Alberta listed the reasons for his reluctance: he was nervous, and so, too, was Mrs. Bull; he enjoyed seeing Paris; he was meeting all the artists and thinkers; he had entered into the spirit of the French mind; he

was learning the French language; he was well and happy and was doing good work. He would have refused to go to Brittany, she went on, if Jules Bois had not also been asked, but Bois, being poor, had jumped at the chance, and now Swamiji could not disappoint him. But, then, Alberta conceded, something good would doubtless come of this unfortunate invitation.

Miss MacLeod thought so, as did Mrs. Bull. Apart from wanting Swamiji's company, they had their reasons for asking him to Brittany. His young English disciple, whom they both looked upon as a daughter, whom they both loved, was suffering the torment of estrangement from her Guru. Sister Nivedita, who had been in Paris to greet Swamiji when he arrived, had found him aloof, withdrawn, suddenly indifferent to her work and to herself. The day after his arrival she, together with Miss MacLeod and Gerald Nobel, had lunched with him at the famed Restaurant Russe on the first landing of the Eiffel Tower.²² She had perhaps seen him on other occasions, but soon—in the second week of August—she had fled to Brittany, sick at heart, possibly bewildered.

It has been said by her biographers that Sister Nivedita misinterpreted Swamiji's general mood of withdrawal as personal indifference toward herself and her work. To quote Pravrajika Atmaprana: "At a time when Nivedita's life current was gradually taking the form of a rapid torrent, that of the Swami was mingling with the infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath. While Nivedita was rushing forward with full vigour, the Swami was drifting about in the will-current of Mother. So his changed attitude was beyond Nivedita's comprehension. It perplexed and irritated her."²³

Yes, but there would surely have been a vast difference in expression between Swamiji's general mood of withdrawal and his personal coolness—a difference which he himself could have made quite clear and which one as perceptive as Nivedita could not have failed to detect. She was not, I believe, mistaken in her interpretation of his attitude. It appears, in fact, that Swamiji had been explicit and that she herself had been distant.

HOMeward BOUND

One finds clear indications of this in a passage of a letter Nivedita wrote to Miss MacLeod around this time:

I was not worthy or ready to accept the personal in him with the loving welcome that it should have had.... Swami has cut me off by a well-deserved stroke.... How strange! Who would have believed a week ago that today I should stand to Him in Miss Muller's position—only cut off by His act—not my own—and yet it has happened—and is well somehow. I have now nothing to live for but Him, and those Hindu women of the future who are to be His. And this is absolutely true today and never has been before—Is it not strange? Yet I do not feel that I can send Him a letter or a messenger or treat Him otherwise than as if He were literally dead.²⁴

Nivedita's many weeks in Paris of "discipleship" (as she called it) to Patrick Geddes had been weeks of frustration and anguish. Her effort to work for the sociologist had proved, all in all, a source of pain both to herself and to him. She had longed to help him. She had worked earnestly and steadily, living in a monkish garret of the Geddeses' Paris house.

Here is this soul [she wrote to Miss MacLeod in July], surely the sweetest that ever breathed, asking one to accept its gifts (for I cannot call his companionship and thought anything but a priceless gift), and only *begging* in return, like the humblest beggar too, not as one who had a *right*, that one should be the voice or the hand that his thought and heart require. And when I fail, as I do at each point—cataloguing and indexing, lecture-reporting, report-making, all alike—he only sighs and says, "Well, I am sure you could do it in three months"! I feel torn to pieces.... I am at bottom totally divergent and you know this appalling sincerity of mine. I *cannot* be a reporter: it is not that I will not; it is that I *cannot*. When

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

I try I disappoint him so much, because I am not even a good stenographer. So you see my despair!...I believe our friend is asking the impossible of the world, and I am fool enough to feel that I would die to give it to him, with the utmost joy. As I cannot die, and could not help if I did, I shall go on struggling with my expression and adding to the disappointment in his, till the moment Swami's signal comes. But I *wish* he had not those exquisite hopes at the beginning of discipleship. Each one is a thorn now.²⁵

Considering Nivedita's involvement with Professor Geddes's work, one cannot be reasonably surprised at her inability to accord Swamiji a wholehearted welcome, nor can one be surprised at a certain coolness on his part. Surely he would have seen in her preoccupation with Professor Geddes an indication that her mind was moving away from the work he had given her and had painstakingly trained her for. With the benefit of hindsight one can, I believe, clearly see this curious Geddes episode as a turning point in Nivedita's life and thought; how much more clearly would not Swamiji have at once seen the turn of his disciple's mind. And how keen must have been his disappointment, his hurt. He at once gave her the freedom to work in her own way, to find her own truth, her own mode of service. It was a freedom he knew she would, in any case, be bound to take, compelled by her own nature—had, indeed, already taken.

Swamiji's act shocked Nivedita into a fervent rededication of herself to his will and to "those Hindu women of the future who are to be His." Yet it was too late, or so she thought, to tell him of this. The situation was unbearable. Soothingly, Mrs. Bull invited her to the Breton coast, and from there she finally wrote to her Guru. It is said by Pravrajika Atmaprana that in this letter, which I have not seen, Nivedita "complained, she blamed, and she sought for guidance and solicitude."²⁶ A measure of her suffering may also be gathered from Lizelle Reymond's description of the letter in *The Dedicated* as "clumsily

HOMeward BOUND

written." Sister Nivedita's letters were sometimes obscure, but seldom were they clumsy. Only great stress, one thinks, could make them so. Her words had come forth, perhaps, from both a contrite heart and a rebellious mind and had fallen all over themselves in confusion. It was perhaps this letter she was to write of to Miss MacLeod:

I wish I had not *struck* back at Swami in writing my last letter to him! Hours after—I knew that I could have said it all so very differently—for when I cried out hour after hour, "But why did you do it *that way*, Swami?" the answer came back, "Why did *you* hurt *Him*? The same law!" But now I do not attach undue importance to the one more than to the other. Some day all will be made right—in life or in death. It does not matter which.²⁷

Swamiji's reply, dated August 25, can be found in volume six of the *Complete Works*. After explaining that he had resigned the presidentship of the Ramakrishna Mission and had no more connection with the work—"I am done with everyone here and in India"—he went on to answer Nivedita directly, sternly:

Your letter indicates that I am jealous of your new friends. You must know once for all I am born without jealousy, without avarice, without the desire to rule—whatever other vices I am born with.

I never directed you before; now, after I am nobody in the work, I have no direction whatever. I only know this much: So long as you serve 'Mother' with a whole heart, She will be your guide.

I never had any jealousy about what friends you made. I never criticised my brethren for mixing up in anything. Only I do believe the Western people have the peculiarity of trying to force upon others whatever seems good to them, forgetting that what is good for you may not be good for others. As such I am afraid you would try to force

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

upon others whatever turn your mind might take in contact with new friends. That was the only reason I sometimes tried to stop any particular influence and nothing else.

You are free, have your own choice, your own work. . . .²⁸

There could be no reply to this, no appeal. Whether or not Nivedita answered is not certain. In any case, Swamiji wrote to her again three days later. His letter was impersonal in tone, almost a prose poem, permeated by the mood of the seer who perceives the unreality of the world and of life in the world. But beautiful as his words were, they held out no comfort, took back no sentence. Nivedita's "freedom" remained stark and irreversible. "Mrs. Bull who loved her as her own daughter thought it would be best if the Swami would come [to Perros-Guirec] for a few days," Pravrajika Atmaprana writes in *Sister Nivedita*. "Hence she invited him."²⁹ And it was no doubt for the same reason that Miss MacLeod added her own plea.

3

Almost two months earlier (on July 21) Sara Bull had given up her Paris apartment at 235, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré and, along with her inseparable companion Mrs. Briggs, had taken the night train to Lannion, Brittany, some three hundred miles to the west. From there they had traveled the short distance to Trégastel-Plage, a small village in the department of Côte du Nord, where Mrs. Bull had rented a house from from a Mlle de Wolska. (This Mlle de Wolska, whom Swamiji was undoubtedly to meet during his stay at Perros-Guirec, was a friend of Josephine MacLeod's and seems to have owned a number of houses in Brittany. Miss MacLeod had met her in New York in 1897 and, as she wrote to Mrs. Bull, had found her "*our* sort," by which she meant that she would appreciate Swamiji. "[She] is going to translate Raja

HOMEWARD BOUND

Yoga," Miss MacLeod wrote. "She is all enthusiasm over *our* Vedanta and its prophet.... I like her more and more."¹ Whether or not Mlle de Wolska translated *Raja Yoga*, I do not know; one does know, however, that she was a highly entertaining conversationalist. "I wish you could hear Mdlle de Wolska talk for a while," Dr. Janes wrote to his wife from Perros-Guirec. "She is a character. She serves up the local priests in good shape, and is thoroughly alive to the superstitions of the people though she is a Catholic herself. Her portraiture of the English on our walk to Trégastel was too funny for anything.")²

The Breton coast with its huge pink and grey boulders, its brisk salt air, and its country life suited Mrs. Bull so well that she decided to stay on. "It is the real peasant country," she wrote to Emma Thursby from Trégastel, "and one feels the druidic past as the great boulders with their massive bulk loom up against the sky between one and the mountain isles beyond.... It is so thoroughly sea air that I do not know if you would like it with the harvesting that is going on now.... [But] there are fresh eggs and good milk to be had & you & I can always get on with these when nature is so lovely."³ Mrs. Bull soon moved some nine miles east to the small fishing village of Perros-Guirec, which was then becoming popular as a resort town and was not devoid, as Miss Thursby was to write, of "all kinds of interesting people—poets, artists, etc."⁴ At Perros-Guirec Mlle de Wolska also owned a small house, named Ker Anna, into which Mrs. Bull, her entourage, and her guests moved in the early part of August. Toward the end of that month she rented another house in Perros-Guirec, known as "the House of the Sacristan," and about the first of September, as one learns from the letters of Dr. Janes and Miss Thursby, both of whom numbered among her August guests, she moved her household to yet another, and larger, villa.

"I slept last night for the first time in the house of the Sacristan," Dr. Janes wrote to his wife on August 22, "which Mrs. Bull will occupy until the first of September. Then she is going

to the 'mysterious villa,' as Mrs. Briggs calls it—an old place with high walls, round towers, quaint gables and a beautiful garden."⁵

One might suppose from this that it was in the "mysterious villa" that Swamiji lived during his stay in Brittany, but Mrs. Bull's arrangements were not so simple as Dr. Janes makes out. In an August letter to her sister Ina, Miss Thursby mentions that her hostess had taken *two* villas at Perros-Guirec for September, and on September 20 she wrote to Ina from the Pyrenees, "Mrs. Bull has taken a third villa to entertain Mr. [John] Lund [a long-time and close Norwegian friend of the Bull family] and his daughter, and the Swami and friend."⁶ In connection with this third villa, Mrs. Bull had written to Emma Thursby on Wednesday, September 17, "The' adjoining cottage makes everything easy. I have room now for all until October 1st." And in this same letter she wrote, "I expect Swami and his friend M. Bois this evening."⁷

Little is known of Swamiji's visit of almost two weeks in the little fishing village on the jagged and boulder-strewn coast of Brittany, but one may be almost certain that it was restful. In 1900 he saw, of course, a Brittany that no longer exists—a country where the people lived and worked and prayed much as they had done for generations past. The twentieth century had not yet made its inroads, for good or ill, into the old traditions, beliefs, and customs. In an earlier letter to his wife, Dr. Janes wrote of this part of France, through which he had passed on his way to Paris from Le Havre: "The grey stone houses looked as if they had stepped out of a picture-book, and so did the peasant women in their bright dresses and sabots, the peasant men in their blouses, and the priests in the square hats, long black coats, and white cassocks."⁸ (He was here describing Normandy; but neighboring Brittany was not different in its picture-book color and charm.)

The life in Perros-Guirec was simple, and good hostess that she was, Mrs. Bull would not have unnecessarily fussed over her guests nor have forced entertainment upon them. She would

HOMeward BOUND

have allowed Swamiji to relax, to walk by the sea on the cliffs or beaches, to follow the country lanes and roads, to visit the old churches and shrines, to take treatments, if he wished, from the ever-present Mrs. Melton (who, it so happened, was just then living in a nearby chateau trying to work a miracle on the half-mad son of an aged countess)⁹, to remain silent or to talk, as he wished, to be alone or not, as the spirit moved him. On some warm night he may have taken the same walk that Nivedita had written of in August to Miss MacLeod: "Two or three of us came down the little lane a night or two ago, in the dark, and as we reached the threshold [of a religious community] we heard the clear tones of a chant, in a woman's voice. We stood still and listened and then came the response of a man's voice. And on and on it went, solemn and grand in the black night and the starlight."¹⁰

Unhappily for us, almost everyone to whom Swamiji ordinarily wrote long and informative letters was there with him, and these people themselves—Sara Bull, Josephine MacLeod, and Sister Nivedita had no need to write confiding letters to one another. Nor does one find in either Miss MacLeod's or Sister Nivedita's published memoirs much that pertains to Brittany. It is stated in the *Life*, and repeated elsewhere, that Swamiji spoke of Lord Buddha a great deal in Perros-Guirec, but the source of this information is not given, and although the references and quotations in the *Life* have been taken from Nivedita's *The Master as I Saw Him*, she herself does not say where or when Swamiji had told these stories or expressed these views of Buddha. Indeed, as far as I know, there is no direct information about his conversations and moods during this period.

However, from a letter he wrote to Swami Turiyananda from "the seacoast of France" it is clear that he was not feeling well. "My body and mind are broken down," he confessed; "I need rest badly."¹¹ From this same letter, which was concerned in part with the trust deed of the Belur Math and in part with the slowness at the Math of an urgent work, it is

also clear that one facet of his mind was thunderous. Even in the act of retiring, Swamiji had causes for annoyance; even as he rejoiced, he raged. Indeed, who could ever know Swamiji? At one and the same time Alberta found him "jolly as could be," taking an interest in everything, Jules Bois found him plunged immovably in meditation for hours on end, Nivedita found him withdrawn, indifferent, Swami Turiyananda found him in a fury of impatience. One can only describe the different aspects of his life and nature consecutively, but one should remember that they were somehow simultaneous, that each was as real as the others, and that all—even his storms—were lit by the steadily luminous and altogether indescribable depths of his being.

To refresh the reader's memory about the Belur Math trust deed: As early as December of 1899, perhaps earlier, Swamiji had considered making a trust of the Math. To judge from the letter he had written on December 12 of 1899 to Mrs. Bull, this was primarily a matter of legal necessity. As has been pointed out earlier, the property of the Math, being nominally owned by Swamiji (rather than by a religious organization), was subject to taxation, and those of his fellow countrymen who opposed his ideas planned to take full advantage of this technicality and thus bring the Math to ruin. Under these circumstances, it was essential that Swamiji deed the property to a number of trustees. Over and above such legal considerations, however, he knew, as so many of his letters make clear, that the time had come for him to cut his bonds, to turn over the government and responsibility of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission to his brother monks, and to stand free. But in laying down his leadership, Swamiji naturally wanted to do so in the best possible way for the future.

There is only scant knowledge available of the terms he had in mind. On January 17 of 1900 he had written to Mrs. Bull: "I want to make out a trust-deed of the Math in the names of Saradananda, Brahmananda and yourself. I will do it as

HOMeward BOUND

soon as I get the papers from Saradananda. Then I am quits.”¹² At this time he had evidently already sent his instructions to Swami Saradananda. It is possible, however, that after this date he changed his mind, perhaps more than once. Thus his letter of January 17 to Mrs. Bull does not necessarily spell out his final wish. In any event, on July 19 Swami Saradananda mailed a draft of the trust deeds (which involved the Math funds as well as its property), together with other pertinent papers, to Swamiji, in care of Mr. Leggett. The trust deeds had been drawn up according to the Math’s understanding of Swamiji’s wishes, but when the papers reached him in Paris about a month later, he was not satisfied with the wording of the drafts. Nevertheless, he signed them and returned them.

“I gave Mrs. Bull a chance to draw her money [about Rs. 30,000] out of the Math,” he wrote to Sister Nivedita in his letter of August 25; “and she did not say anything about it, and [as] the trust-deeds were waiting here to be executed, I got them executed duly at the British consulate and they are on their way to India now.”¹³

“I have not reserved any right or ownership for myself,” he wrote to Swami Turiyananda a few days later (September 1). “You now possess everything, and will manage all work by the Master’s grace.”¹⁴ In this particular letter to Swami Turiyananda Swamiji seemed agreeable enough; but evidence that he was not satisfied, to say the least, with the wording of the trust deed appears in the Bengali version of his letter to Swami Turiyananda from “the seacoast of France.” In the Bengali edition of the *Complete Works*, this letter (there dated, wrongly, “August, 1900”) is given with fewer omissions than in the English edition. A translation of the passages that reveal Swamiji’s displeasure reads as follows:

I have cut myself off by a will. Now I am writing to say that nobody will have sole power. All will be done in accordance with the view of the majority. . . . If a trust-deed on similar lines can be executed, then I am free. . . . Now

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

you people do what you please. I have finished my part of the work. I was indebted to Guru Maharaj [Sri Ramakrishna]. I have paid off this debt by working out my life. How can I tell you any of this? They have sent me a draft of a document in which they are the boss of everything. And I have signed [agreed to] everything of it except this their becoming the boss of everything. Gangadhar [Swami Akhandananda], you, Kali [Swami Abhedananda], Sashi [Swami Ramakrishnananda], the new boys, I have pushed them aside, and I have made Rakhal and Baburam [Swami Brahmananda and Swami Premananda] the boss of them all. My Master used to consider them great. This is his work, therefore I have held up my soul and signed this. I am now going to do *my* work. I have paid off my debt to Guru Maharaj by crushing out my life. He has no longer any claim on me. Whatever work you are doing is the work of Guru Maharaj. Go on doing it. What I had to do I have done. Finished. So therefore do not write to me anything about it. Nor tell me; I have no yes or no opinion about it. Henceforth that is how it will be.¹⁵

(Since this portion of Swamiji's letter is published without explanation in the Bengali edition of the *Complete Works*, it should be said that much of his annoyance—as revealed, I have been reliably informed, in the full, unpublished letter—was connected not with the terms of the trust deed but with the building of an urgently needed embankment on the Math grounds. The work was not proceeding as quickly as he, in his torrential impatience to see it finished, could have wished. "...if you are not able to construct the embankment this year," he had written to Swami Brahmananda on August 10, 1899, "then you will see the fun! I want work—no humbug about it."¹⁶ Now, over a year later, the embankment, a difficult engineering project, was not yet complete. True to his word, Swamiji flamed. Later, on his return to India, he found

HOMeward BOUND

the work at the Math had progressed as quickly as possible. On December 26 he wrote to Miss MacLeod—who, like Mrs. Bull, had all along disapproved of his harsh scoldings of his *guruhais*, but who, also like Mrs. Bull, had small conception of the profundity and constancy of his love for them and of the immense importance of their future work—“They [his brother monks] have worked all right as far as they could; I am glad, and feel myself quite a fool on account of my nervous chagrin. They are as good and as faithful as ever, and they are in good health. Write all this to Mrs. Bull and tell her she was always right and I was wrong, and I beg a hundred thousand pardons of her.” As for the trust deed, a new draft was prepared in Calcutta to Swamiji’s satisfaction. Later still, because of legal necessity, the deed was again redrafted and on January 30, 1901, was reexecuted.)

But in September of 1900 when he came to Brittany, Swamiji was disappointed and impatient in some part of his mind. It is possible that Nivedita, distressed to start with, took his air of general displeasure as an intensification of his coolness toward herself; her own attitude, thus compounded, could have reached a level of despair. Yet however that may have been, Swamiji’s deep, unalterable affection for his disciple, her own unhappiness over what she felt to be his indifference, and her emotional recommitment to his work brought about a reconciliation of sorts. Swamiji wrote a poem for his spiritual daughter:

The mother’s heart, the hero’s will,
The sweetness of the southern breeze,
The sacred charm and strength that dwell
On Aryan altars, flaming, free;

All these be yours, and many more
No ancient soul could dream before—
Be thou to India’s future son
The mistress, servant, friend in one.¹⁹

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Yet, his warmth of heart notwithstanding, it is clear from subsequent events that in Brittany Swamiji did not give Nivedita advice, did not discuss her work with her, was not even altogether certain that her mind and heart were fully committed, that they would not turn into other channels, become absorbed in other interests. He did not retract his words: "You are free, have your own choice, your own work..." On the eve of her departure from Perros-Guirec, Nivedita appears to have been brokenhearted still.

"Don't you remember the night in Brittany before I left for England," she was to write to Mrs. Bull at the end of 1906, "—when I told you how I was going out into the unknown—to see R.K. and Mother—away from the 'Father' who had become so beloved—and you were so kind and good?"²⁰

The circumstances of Swamiji's farewell to his spiritual daughter, which took place on that same night, were, as were so many incidents in his life, lighted with the charm and grace that, unawares, attend the spiritually great at every turn. In her penetrating and sensitive book *The Master as I Saw Him*, which she was to complete in 1910, Nivedita caught this element of poetry in her often-quoted account of the scene:

When I said good-bye to him in Brittany in September, 1900, I was on the eve of returning alone to England, there to find friends and means, if possible, for the Indian work. I knew nothing as yet of the length of my stay. I had no plans. And the thought may have crossed his [Swamiji's] mind that old ties were perilous to a foreign allegiance. He had seen so many betrayals of honour that he seemed always to be ready for a new desertion. In any case, the moment was critical to the fate of the disciple, and this he did not fail to realise. Suddenly, on my last evening in Brittany, when supper was some time over, and the darkness had fallen, I heard him at the door of my little arbour-study, calling me into the garden. I came out, and found him waiting to give me his blessing, before leaving,

HOMeward BOUND

with a man-friend, for the cottage where they were both housed.

"There is a peculiar set of Mohammedans," he said, when he saw me, "who are reported to be so fanatical that they take each new-born babe, and expose it, saying, 'If God made thee, perish! If Ali made thee, live!' Now this which they say to the child, I say, but in the opposite sense, to you, to-night—'Go forth into the world, and there, if I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!' "

Yet he came again next morning, soon after dawn, to say farewell, and in my last memory of him in Europe, I look back once more from the peasant market-cart, and see his form against the morning sky, as he stands on the road outside our cottage at Lannion [actually Perros-Guirec], with hands uplifted, in that Eastern salutation which is also benediction.²¹

Swamiji would not see his spiritual daughter again until March of 1902.

According to a passage from a letter that Sister Nivedita was to write to Mrs. Bull six years later and that has been quoted by Lizelle Reymond in *The Dedicated*, she was to look back upon Swamiji's words in the garden at Perros-Guirec as "his apostolic charge to me."²² It is true that his words had pointedly stressed the divine aspect of the task he had given her, but in what way they were an "apostolic charge" is not clear, nor does Nivedita herself seem to have thought them so at the time. As is well known, the path she was to choose, for a while at least, had very little to do with the education of Hindu women and, because of its involvement in Indian politics, was incompatible with the policies of the Ramakrishna Order. It was not until after Swamiji's death that his thought, welling up in her, became the truly dominant motive of her life and that she became a strong vessel for his ideas and a sensitive instrument of his will.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

In London many distractions and influences entered Nivedita's life, many enthusiasms, attachments, and impassioned convictions, and precisely because these were centered around India and were not by any means less than noble, they were all the more diverting. Easily they could seem ordained and Right; and easily they could have led her away altogether from the great life and work for which Swamiji had meticulously trained her. Indeed it is possible that if Sri Sarada Devi had not called Nivedita back to India in the early part of 1901, she would not have returned when she did—late though that was; she would not have seen Swamiji once again, would not have become the great-souled Nivedita we know today.

Sister Nivedita left England at the very end of 1901. She voyaged on the *Mombassa* in company with Mrs. Bull and Mr. Romesh Chandra Dutt, with whom she had become well acquainted in London. The ship docked in Madras on February 3. The following day, she and Mr. Dutt were accorded a large public reception, complete with an address of welcome. In reply, she gave a long and stirring talk.²³ She spoke primarily in praise of India's great son, Dr. Jagadis Chandra Bose, in whose work and personality she had become absorbed during her stay in England and in whose scientific genius she felt India might see proof of its intellectual superiority to the West. Her address was so fervently and so eloquently pro-Indian and nationalistic that the British police thenceforth kept a baleful and wary eye on her activities. From Madras the party sailed, still on the *Mombassa*, to Calcutta.

Swamiji, who was at the time in Benares, welcomed Nivedita by letter with deep affection and blessing. "May all powers come unto you!" he wrote. "May Mother Herself be your hands and mind! It is immense power—irresistible—that I pray for you, and, if possible, along with it infinite peace.... If there was any truth in Shri Ramakrishna, may He take you into His leading, even as He did me, nay, a thousand times more!"²⁴

HOMeward BOUND

Later on, as Sister Christine was to tell a Swami of the Ramakrishna Order, Swamiji was to scold Nivedita severely for her political involvements, until, unable to bear more, she begged him to stop. He made it clear that she could not be associated with both the Ramakrishna Math and the political movements of the time. She must decide to give up one or the other. She told him she would think about it; but before she could give him her answer, Swamiji died.

As is well known, shortly thereafter Swami Brahmananda gave Sister Nivedita the same choice, and on July 18 she resigned from the Order. "Everything is so different from what it was meant to be," she had written to Miss MacLeod two days earlier, "and the Monks [Swami Brahmananda, Swami Saradananda, and others] are so sure that I ought to act differently, and yet I cannot do differently from this. How I wish I had his direct guidance!"²⁵

The conflict was not easily resolved. Perhaps in time it became intensified. More than four years later, on December 20 of 1906, Nivedita wrote to Mrs. Bull:

When I think what Swamiji planned what my life should be, and how different I have made it, I feel utterly broken-hearted. If one could stand the hot weather all the year round, we could take women into our homes as He wished. But one can't. And I suppose it is really true that one can't—and not mere selfishness—for these illnesses have proved it. Don't be impatient with me, dear friend! . . . Sometimes I think this is only the first attempt—and I shall be allowed to try again and again—Christianity was 1100 years old, before it produced S. Francis—1500 before St. Teresa. Who knows how often *they* had tried and felt that they were failures? But again, I don't see any hint of such achievement—but rather a descent to lower levels. Well! Well! I'll hold on and try. But there seems no path for me here, except silence and submission—even in matters where I feel an overwhelming need

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

to choose my own path and assert my own ideal. But oh! Am I betraying a trust? Am I? Am I? Who can answer that for me?"²⁶

Time has answered. As the years passed after Swamiji's death all the many blessings he had bestowed upon his spiritual daughter, the training he had given her, and the insights he had granted became deeply and harmoniously established within her and, as is well known, bore wonderful fruit. During her visit to the West in 1899 and 1900 Nivedita changed, there is no question; but she was not destroyed.

4

The exact date of the early morning when Swamiji stood, his hands "uplifted in that Eastern salutation which is also benediction," as the peasant market-cart carried his "daughter" down the road and out of sight, is not known. It is certain, however, that he left Perros-Guirec at the end of September. It is known that he visited Mont-Saint-Michel on September 29, the feast of the Archangel Michael, when pilgrims flock to this ancient and famous abbey built on a tiny island of granite off the coast of Normandy. Through the centuries the abbey and its church, the construction of which was commenced in the year 708, have been enlarged, cresting their little mountain and crowding over it, until the whole island looks as though it had been carved into a fortress-shrine, or, again, as though the shrine itself had risen from the sea or, when the tide is out, from the gleaming sandflats that stretch to the horizon.

Possibly Swamiji stayed overnight at an inn in the little village nestled at the foot of the abbey and then traveled on to Paris. Mrs. Bull. very probably went on to Paris too, for this had been her plan. "I will join you [in Paris] the 1st day of October," she had written to Miss Thursby on September 13. Further, one finds Nivedita addressing two letters to her

HOMeward BOUND

apartment at 235, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, one dated September 29 and the other October 3. It is, in fact, possible that Mrs. Bull gave up her various houses in Perros-Guirec at the end of September, planning shortly to join Nivedita in England. "I go to London direct from Paris," she had told Miss Thursby.¹

But to know Mrs. Bull's plans is one thing and to know her actual whereabouts in October of 1900 is another, and until more information comes to light we cannot be certain of the latter. We do know, however, that Swamiji and M. Jules Bois intended to visit Brittany for four or five days in mid-October; and almost certainly they did so. It is possible that Miss MacLeod, rather than Mrs. Bull, was their hostess at this time, and in any event, it is clear that the letter of invitation did not come from Mrs. Bull. In *Prabuddha Bharata* of July 1949 one finds a translation of M. Bois's reply to it, which reads in part:

Mademoiselle,

I have received your kind letter and thank you very much for your charming invitation. The Swami and I are thinking of leaving Paris on Monday, next week, to join you again in Lannion.... The Swami and I are too happy for words to meet you again in such good health and in such a beautiful country.²

Actually Miss MacLeod (assuming she was the "Mademoiselle" here addressed) was not in particularly good health. She was, in fact, in a state of malaise and fatigue, for her unusual. "I had a lovely letter from Yum last night," Sister Nivedita wrote in her letter of October 3 to Mrs. Bull. "It is so pathetic to hear *her* speak of want of rest."³ For the next year or two thereafter one reads again and again in Sister Nivedita's letters of "Yum's" poor health. What was wrong, specifically, is never said, but whatever the trouble may have been it would have been natural for Joe to stay on for a part of October in

VIVĒKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Brittany, where the fresh sea air was like a tonic and where there was nothing to do but rest. It would also have been natural for her to invite Swamiji and M. Bois to be her guests.

As far as I am aware, no details are known of Swamiji's October visit to Brittany, except that its dates, as Swami Vidyatmananda has deduced, were very probably October 15, a Monday, to October 19 or 20. One supposes that everyone concerned enjoyed those four or five days.

Swamiji had added a postscript to M. Bois's letter to "Mademoiselle." It was his first attempt to write a note in French, and it was all his own. (M. Bois assured "Mademoiselle" that he did not even *look* at what Swamiji had written, let alone correct it.) One can find the note in its original French in *Prabuddha Bharata* of July 1949. The translation, which is in the *Complete Works*, reads in part: "...I am having the best of times after many years. I find life here with Mr. Bois very satisfactory—the books, the calm, and the absence of everything that usually troubles me. But I don't know what kind of destiny is waiting for me now..."⁴

Was this not an expression of the same serenity and peace that Swamiji had written of in his letter of September 1 to Swami Turiyananda? The "scholar's life" amidst books and calm that he had long wanted had come to him, and with it must have come the "intense meditation and repetition of the Lord's name" of which he had earlier written—perhaps becoming now even more intense, for calm surroundings always brought meditation to Swamiji. The very sight, for instance, of a replica of a dungeon-cage at Mont-Saint-Michel, an iron and wood cage about eight feet square and eight feet high, once suspended betwixt ceiling and floor and in which men had been confined in almost unrelieved solitude—a sight to chill the blood and send shivers down the ordinary spine—only reminded Swamiji of the hermit's cell. "What a wonderful place for meditation!"⁵ he was heard to murmur.

Though perhaps not so desirable as a dungeon-cage, M. Bois's rooms, quiet and often solitary, were also a good place

HOMeward BOUND

to meditate, and thus one finds Swamiji's mind bounding upward in these October days to its own serene level. On October 14, 1900, the day before he and M. Bois left for their second visit to Brittany, he wrote to Sister Christine in French. It was a long and beautiful letter, and Swamiji's French (I have seen an early copy of the original) seems quite an advance over the short, slightly stiff postscript to "Made-moiselle" of a week earlier. To Christine he also expressed his happiness, but wrote of a lingering shadow on its perfection: "Je suis heureux, oui, je le suis vraiment, mais le nuage ne m'a quitté tout à fait. Il revient malheureusement quelquefois mais il n'a pas l'aspect de morbidité qu'il avait autrefois." "I am happy, yes, I really am, but the cloud has not completely left me. Unfortunately it returns at times but it has not the air of gloom it formerly had."⁶

This was the cloud that had followed Swamiji from India and that he had spoken of so often as two years of "torture," physical and mental. Virtually it had passed. One tends to think of Swamiji's moods in terms of the sky or the sea, and one pictures now a vault of almost unbroken blue, only a tendril of white cloud crosses the sun now and then—the last remnants of a gigantic storm. But in speaking of Swamiji's moods, one again remembers how different was his psychology from ours. He had lived on both sides of that storm at once: in the untouched infinity of light and space above it, and in the heart of its lightning-rent, wind-torn darkness. It is perhaps impossible to say fully what the genesis of that turbulence was; but, as I wrote at the beginning of this book, it was obviously caused on one level by the frustration of trying to move and lift the massive, *tamas*-ridden thought of the world and of attempting to introduce a new path and to set in motion—in the short span of a year or two—the machinery by which his work and message would be carried forward for centuries and centuries to come. "I must," he had written in 1897, "...put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back." This, actually, he had fully

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

accomplished; the work he had done in so short a time was incredible, the victories he had achieved were tremendous and far-reaching. Yet, he was impatient of delay, of obstacles and opposition. He who saw so clearly that which needed to be done, and why and how, he who lived in eternity could not but feel torment at the slow unfolding in time of his great vision and achievement. And his impatience, as well as his incessant work, told on nerves exquisitely tuned to receive and transmit the most subtle of spiritual impulses.

Sister Nivedita, closer to Swamiji, in some respects, than any of his other disciples or friends, more sensitive to his moods, and, in later years at least, more appreciative of the enormous scope of his ideal and the difficulty of his task, was to write in a letter of 1903 of "the bitter sense of failure" under which he had worked all the last years of his life.⁷ She would have meant, one thinks, the years she knew him in India and the West until the fall of 1899 when she left him in Ridgely Manor, for after that she had seen him only briefly from time to time. True, there had been an angry mood in Brittany, but on the whole the "cloud" had slowly begun to move away after the close of 1899. Sister Nivedita was herself to write in *The Master as I Saw Him*:

The outstanding impression made by the Swami's bearing, during all these months of European and American life, was one of almost complete indifference to his surroundings. Current estimates of value left him entirely unaffected. He was never in any way startled or incredulous under success, being too deeply convinced of the greatness of the Power that worked through him, to be surprised by it. But neither was he unnerved by external failure. Both victory and defeat would come and go. He was their witness. "Why should I care, if the world itself were to disappear?" he said once. "According to my philosophy, that, you know, would be a very good thing! But in fact," he added, in tones suddenly graver,

HOMeward BOUND

“all that is against me must be with me in the end. Am I not **HER** soldier?”⁸

The soaring peace and freedom that Swamiji had experienced and given expression to in Alameda was now, in Paris, mirrored in the world of events. His last teaching-lecture in the West had been given; his leadership of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission had been laid aside like the spear and shield of an indomitable warrior who knows that however bitter his failures may have seemed, his main, crucial battles had been won. Even his financial problems had been solved: he had earned enough for the Math's security and, in addition, had repaid the money he had borrowed to buy his mother a house. “I believe I have told you that Swami has paid back the money which he took from the Math fund,” Swami Saradananda wrote to Mrs. Bull on November 15 of 1900, “and has also sent money for his law suits. He told me to let you know this as soon as possible.”⁹ (The lawsuits were no doubt those he had brought against his aunt, who would not give his mother possession of the house. “He left everything in order,” Sister Nivedita was to write to Miss MacLeod shortly after his death. “On Sunday [June 29, 1902] He told me that the lawsuit with the family that had been hanging over Him for 3 years was compromised by them voluntarily in His favor—and He was satisfied at last! It was the same with everything.”)¹⁰

In Paris Swamiji's life was falling into order, smoothing itself into a sea that perfectly mirrored the sky. He felt no further need to work—neither for the sake of teaching nor for the sake of earning money. “The call has come from Above,” he had said to Swami Turiyananda (most likely in New York): “‘Come away, just come away—no need of troubling your head to teach others.’ It is now the will of the Grand Old Lady that the play should be over.” (The “Grand Old Lady” was a figure in a children's game, to touch whom put one outside the play.)

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

In his letter of August 25, after signing the first draft of the trust deed, he wrote to Nivedita: "Now I am free, as I have kept no power or authority or position for me in the work. I also have resigned the Presidentship of the Ramakrishna Mission. The Math etc., belong now to the immediate disciples of Ramakrishna except myself. The Presidentship is now Brahmananda's—next it will fall on Premananda etc., etc., in turn. I am so glad a whole load is off me, now I am happy."

And in his letter of October 14 to Sister Christine, he wrote in French:

I am sending all the money I earned in America to India. Now I am free, the begging monk as before. I have also resigned from the presidentship of the Monastery. Thank God, I am free! It is no more for me to carry such a responsibility. I am so nervous and so weak.

"As the birds which have slept in the branches of a tree wake up, singing when the dawn comes, and soar up into the deep blue sky, so is the end of my life."

I have had many difficulties, and also some very great successes. But all my difficulties and suffering count for nothing, as I have succeeded. I have attained my aim. I have found the pearl for which I dived into the ocean of life. I have been rewarded. I am pleased.

Thus it seems to me that a new chapter of my life is opening. It seems to me that Mother will now lead me slowly and softly. No more effort on roads full of obstacles, now it is the bed prepared with birds' down. Do you understand that? Believe me, I feel quite sure.¹²

It was not, of course, Swamiji's position as leader of the Ramakrishna Order that had tied him, as it were, to the earth and a mission; it was his heart—his all-embracing love that expressed itself in his detailed concern for individuals as well as in his boundless compassion for the whole of mankind. This

HOMeward BOUND

bond too—the bond by which the Divine Mother had “made a slave”¹³ of him—was breaking. Since leaving California he had been struggling to rid himself of all emotion. “I am determined to get rid of all sentimentalism, and emotionalism,” he had written in June of 1900 from New York to Mary Hale, “and hang me if you ever find me emotional. I am the Advaitist; our goal is knowledge—no feelings, no love, as all that belongs to matter and superstition and bondage. I am only existence and knowledge.... Don’t for a moment worry on my account. ‘Mother’ looks after me. She is bringing me fast out of the hell of emotionalism, and bringing me into the light of pure reason....”¹⁴

“Non-attachment has always been there, “he added in a postscript. “It has come in a minute. Very soon I shall stand where no sentiment can touch me. No feeling.”¹⁵

“Swami is all against bhakti and emotion now,” Sister Nivedita had written from New York in the same month to Miss MacLeod, “—determined to banish it, he says.”¹⁶

One is inclined to doubt that Swamiji fully succeeded in this. “If in this hell of a world one can bring a little joy and peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true; this I have learnt after suffering all my life; all else is mere moonshine....”¹⁷ Thus he was to write to Swami Brahmananda a few months before his death. There was no end, in any sense, to his love. Yet, at the same time, there was no bondage in it for anyone. He himself, however much he might deplore his “emotionalism,” stood entirely, consciously free. One is here reminded of how he had turned on Sister Nivedita in New York in June of 1900 when she had “offered him advice that struck him as wrong.” “I wish you could have seen him!” she wrote to Miss MacLeod. “It was worth the offense to catch such a glimpse! He said, ‘Remember that I am free—free—*born* free!’ And then he talked of the Mother and of how he wished the work and the world would break to pieces that he might go and sit down in the Himalayas and meditate.”¹⁸

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Yet, leadership was implicit in Swamiji's very being. Whatever his legal position in the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was to be during the last year or so of his life, he remained the leader; it could not have been otherwise. Nor could he lay down his concern for the work. "It was on the last Sunday before the end," Nivedita writes in *The Master as I Saw Him*, "that he said to one of his disciples, 'You know the Work is always my weak point! When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!'"¹⁹

Nonetheless, Swamiji's life was henceforth to be quiet—lived for the most part at Belur Math and in the depth of God-consciousness. He was to go on a pilgrimage with his mother in the spring of 1901, making up to her at last the pain that he had caused her—or thought he had caused her—by 'his renunciation of the world and that he had always felt so keenly; he was to become absorbed in caring for and playing with his pet animals at Belur Math—an antelope, a stork, ducks and geese, a dog—gazing upon them, Swami Akhandananda recalled, with an indescribable expression of love. ("Witnessing this sight," the Swami said, "one would be reminded of how Sri Krishna would play with his treasured cows.")²⁰ He was to hold scriptural classes for the monks and to insist upon strict discipline and hard austerity in the Math's routine; he was once, in 1901, to send several of his brothers into the depths of meditation—perhaps into samadhi or ecstasy—by his power-charged cry in the courtyard of the Math: "Here is the unveiled presence of the Brahman. . . Ah! here is the Brahman as palpable as a fruit in one's palm. Don't you see? Here!"²¹

"He became radiant looking," Sister Nivedita wrote of his last days to a friend, "just as he used to be in London. . . . And the wonderful divine light somehow never ceased to grow brighter and brighter, whatever might be the state of mind or nerves."²²

Thus he was to live the closing year or so of his life, drifting on the current of the Divine Mother, walking

HOMeward BOUND

immersed in God, until his final, premeditated homecoming of Mahasamadhi.

That journey homeward began in France—not only in Swamiji's reiterated cry "Now I am free!" but in his actual journey back to his Motherland. "I shall travel with Madame Calvé, Miss MacLeod, and M. Jules Bois," he wrote in his letter of October 14 to Sister Christine. "I shall be the guest of Madame Calvé, the famous singer. We shall go to Constantinople, the Near East, Greece, and Egypt...."²³ At what time this trip was first planned is not certain. Mention of it is found in a letter to Swami Turiyananda, dated in the *Complete Works* "September." But this date, broad though it is, does not seem to be correct. To judge from internal evidence, the letter was written in the latter half of October, 1900. Thus "September" cannot, I believe, stand as evidence for anything at all. Nor does Miss MacLeod's reminiscence about the genesis of the plan enlighten us about its time. The place, however, is clear. "One day at luncheon in Paris," she writes, "Madame Emma Calvé, the singer, said she was going to Egypt for the winter. So as I suggested accompanying her, she at once turned to Swami and said, 'Will you come to Egypt with us as my guest?' He accepted."²⁴ Thus was the journey born.

Who planned the route is not known. But it is possible that Swamiji suggested the roundabout trip to Egypt, for, ever a lover of man, ever a fascinated student and observer of the ways of human life, he would have wanted to tour through as much of the Western world as possible. Earlier, he had seen Switzerland, Germany, and Italy (and, of course, the United States, England, and France); now he would see Austria, the Balkan countries, Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt. He intended to return to Paris by way of Italy, touching at cities he had not visited before.

"On our way back, we shall visit Venice," he wrote in his letter of October 14 to Sister Christine. "It may be that I shall give a few lectures in Paris after my return, but they will

be in English with an interpreter. I have no time any more, nor the power to study a new language at my age. I am an old man, isn't it?"²⁶ But Swamiji did not, as we know, return to Paris; nor did any of his later plans to leave India again—to go to England with Mrs. Sevier or to Japan with a Mr. Okakura—take shape. This trip was his leave-taking of the world at large.

He made a final tour of the Paris Exposition, and one wonders if, as he did so, he thought of the World's Fair at Chicago and the Parliament of Religions, at which, seven years earlier, he had ignited the consciousness of the West. Did he remember how he had stood before a multitude of people and set them all cheering with his simple "Sisters and Brothers of America"? He and the West had met at the World's Fair at Chicago; at the International Exposition in Paris they said farewell. Both fairs had heralded the entry of Western civilization into a new era that would bring changes in man's individual and collective life on earth far beyond anyone's most optimistic, most pessimistic, most fantastic dream. Swamiji had walked through both fairs: in the door of one, so to speak, and out the door of the other; people had turned to stare at so much majesty, at so much strangeness. Yet he was as much a part of the coming age as were the awesome scientific exhibits and displays that foreshadowed it and that demanded a new type of human being to match their power, to develop their potential good, to control their latent evil, and, in the end, to transcend them utterly. Swamiji was that new type. By his example he showed man what he must become, and by his precepts he taught him how to attain that unprecedented, theretofore undreamed, stature and dimension.

As he walked now for the last time through the grounds of the Paris Exposition did he think of such things? One does not know. Possibly his thoughts moved far beyond the world and his mission in it; or possibly he felt an immense heartache not for mankind's agonies but for its pathetic prides and glories.

It was a dreary day, overcast and rainy. Many of the temporary buildings were being demolished. "Everything on

HOMeward BOUND

earth has an end," he wrote in his *Memoirs*. "Once again I took a round over the Paris Exposition today.... The breaking up of the Exhibition is a big affair. The streets of this heaven on earth, the Eden-like Paris, will be filled with knee-deep mud and mortar. With the exception of one or two main buildings, all the houses and their parts are but a display of wood and rags and whitewashing—just as the whole world is! And when they are demolished, the lime-dust flies about and is suffocating; rags and sand etc. make the streets exceedingly dirty; and, if it rains in addition, it is an awful mess."²⁸

5

On the overcast evening of October 24, Swamiji and his party boarded the famed *Orient Express*, one of the great trains of the era. Their trip was to be as unspectacular in event as it was undramatic in motive. But according to the *New York World*, and perhaps according to Mme Calvé as well, it was to be the trip of the century. On November 11, a Sunday, the *World* printed a full-page story steeped in pathos, glamour, malice, falsehood, and the "mystery of the East," all of which were so dear to journalists of the day. The text surrounded a large line drawing of a prettified Calvé seated daintily atop an ornately caparisoned and haughty camel, which beast is being led across the desert by a Bedouin; the Pyramids and the Sphinx are visible in the background. In the bottom left-hand corner is a small photograph of Swamiji in a round frame with tassels, and in the upper right-hand corner is a similarly framed photograph of Mme Calvé. The extraordinary banner headlines and text (some portions of which I have quoted earlier) read in part:

STRANGEST OF PILGRIMAGES—CALVÉ'S FLIGHT FOR HEALTH TO THE MYSTIC EAST

* * *

*Brilliant Singer Abandons Her Stage Career and Seeks the
Shrines of Buddha with Mrs. Francis H. Leggett of New York,*

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and Princess Demidoff, Under Charge of the Swami Vivekananda, Whose Occult Soirees at the Paris Home of the Leggetts Have Been a Social Sensation.

Smitten by Disease for Which the Surgeon's Knife Is the Only Cure, the Greatest of Operatic Carmens Rebelled with All the Ardor of Her Passionate Nature, and Now Seeks in the Mystic Lore of the East Relief from the Terrible Death that Menaces Her. By Sailing Yacht She Goes to Smyrna; She May Sing Before the Sultan; She Will Cross the Desert Upon Camel-Back and Will Reach the Snowy Himalayas Only After Long and Strange Wanderings, for Every Phase of Which She Has Appropriate Costumes.

(Special Correspondence of the Sunday World.)

Paris, Nov. 1

Mme. Calve, a fugitive from the surgeon's knife, has broken all her operatic contracts and turned her back on Christendom to immerse herself in the mystery of the East.

Greatest of Carmens, incarnation of passion on the stage, swayed absolutely by the impulses of her warm Southern blood and artist's temperament, the terror of physical pain and possible death has driven her into the remote places of the world, there to seek the aid of occult forces against the malady for which Western science can prescribe nothing better than the knife.

Her guide, philosopher and friend in this remarkable expedition is the Swami Vivekananda, the learned and handsome Hindoo monk who lectured and made converts in this country during the year of the World's Fair.

Doubtless as these lines are being read the self-exiled prima donna and her swarthy tutor will be journeying on camels across the desert from Smyrna to Jerusalem, attended with all the pomp and magnificence of a modern Queen of Sheba, for that is part of the odd programme.

With her and the Swami are the Princess Demidoff

HOMeward BOUND

of Russia, Mrs. Francis H. Leggett of New York and her sister, Miss McLeod. It would not be easy to imagine a stranger assortment of human beings. The story of the Swami Vivekananda and his influence over the Leggetts and how the Leggetts came into association with such a mighty social power as Princess Demidoff and such a queen of music as Calve—this story of modern Paris, with its climax to the tune of camel bells, is worthy of Balzac.

First as to the Swami. He went to America with all the prestige of the highest Hindu caste and all the fascination of a polished man of the world.

The Swami lectured and talked in Chicago, and there was no more picturesque figure at the congress of religions, and none round which the ladies thronged so eagerly.

Picture a sturdy figure of majestic mien draped in an orange-red robe—the habit of his priestly order—and crowned with an elaborate turban and you have the Swami Vivekananda.

That one caught a glimpse of American trousers beneath the robe did not disillusionize his admirers of the susceptible sex. Indeed they seldom looked beyond his eyes....

His male converts were fewer, but some of them were almost as enthusiastic as the women. The most zealous was Francis H. Leggett, the rich grocer.

Not less ardent than Mr. Leggett in pursuit of the Vedanta Philosophy was his fiancée, Mrs. William Sturgis, of Chicago, a beautiful widow many years his junior, who was formerly Miss McLeod, of New York.

Mr. Leggett was anxious that the marriage ceremony between Mrs. Sturgis and himself should be performed by the Swami, but he waived this desire as a concession to American ideas of propriety.

At the earnest request of the bride and bridegroom the Swami accompanied them on their wedding tour, and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

from that day to this they had religiously refrained from eating red meat and other foods pronounced by the Swami unfavorable to the higher spiritual development. . . .

[The correspondent here tells of Mrs. Melton, and then continues:]

Into this singular brew of humanity [at the Leggetts' Paris house] was projected Calve.

Calve, the creature of impulse, the daughter of earth, the passionate, heedless, gypsy-souled songstress, all temperament, all fierce emotion, greatest of Carmens because she is Carmen.

Heedless no longer. Poor, tortured, frightened Calve, all her joys in life turned into terror of the surgeon's knife!

The fiat had gone forth. Fear pursued her night and day. Her very vitality, her very lack of self-discipline were her enemies. Her fancy pictured an operation in colors of unimaginable horror. . . .

The article goes on in this vein for another long column, telling how the party set sail from Paris on a chartered yacht bound for Naples, then Athens, then Smyrna—the whole thing the concoction of some fevered journalist, and believed word by word, one can be sure, by many a fevered reader.

But let us return to the real world and the real trip. The assortment of human beings who actually comprised Calvé's party (or, as I shall call it, Swamiji's party) was stranger than dreamed of by even the correspondent of the *New York World*. In place of Princess Demidoff and Mrs. Francis Leggett were the far more odd (from a journalistic viewpoint at least) Jules Bois, the then famous delver into medieval satanism, necromancy, and the like, and Père Hyacinthe (Charles Loyson) the renowned ex-Carmelite monk, and his wife. (M. and Mme Loyson were not, actually, members of the party; they were, rather, co-travelers. The "very aged" Père Hyacinthe, as Swamiji writes in his *Memoirs*, was on his way to Jerusalem "to

try to establish cordial relations among the Christians and Mussalmans.")¹

As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, Swamiji's "Memoirs of European Travel" (or, in the original Bengali, *Parivrajak*) was begun when he left India in June of 1899. In its first part, as we have seen, Swamiji takes his reader from the mouth of the Hooghly River, where his ship set sail, to London, where it finally docked, giving along the way a feast of information. The second half of the *Memoirs* was written for the most part in Constantinople and describes the trip through Europe. Again Swamiji fills the pages (some thirty-two of them, including the Addenda) with information and penetrating comment from the endlessly varied and voluminous library of his mind. As far as I know, these pages constitute our only source of detailed information about the journey, from its beginning in Paris up to the travelers' departure from Greece.

The *Orient Express* was a magnificently furnished and fitted *train-de-luxe*, consisting from Paris to Vienna of five cars—two sleepers, a diner, and two baggage cars—and for the remainder of the journey of three, having dropped one sleeper and one baggage car in Vienna. Its two-berth compartments were paneled in inlaid mahogany and were luxuriously carpeted and appointed; its seats were upholstered in velvet, with antimacassars of fine Brussels lace; its windows were draped in red damask; its dining car gleamed with crystal and silver; its cuisine was epicurean. This embodiment of imperial elegance, its teakwood sides painted a royal blue and emblazoned with a coat of arms, swept at a stately forty miles an hour through France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, slowing to a more cautious thirty miles an hour through Serbia, Bulgaria, and the European part of Turkey to the Bosphorus—a journey, all told, of 1750 miles, during the course of which the cars changed locomotives twenty-one times.

On the first night (October 24) the *Orient Express* passed through eastern France, and the next day through the southern part of Germany until, in the afternoon, it reached the frontiers

of Austria. In the summer of 1896, Swamiji had, as he writes, seen Germany thoroughly. He knew its tone and feel, so unlike that of France. "Germany, after France," he wrote, "produces quite a jarring effect.... On one side is the artistic workmanship of the dark-haired, comparatively short-statured, luxurious, highly civilized French people, to whom art means life; and on the other, the clumsy daubing, the unskillful manipulation, of tawny-haired, tall, gigantic German.... The German muscle can go on striking small blows untiringly, till death; the French have tender, feminine bodies, but when they do concentrate and strike, it is a sledge-hammer blow, and is irresistible."

But heavy-handed, plodding, and persistent, Germany was the dominant power in Europe. "'On the one hand the moon is setting,'" Swamiji wrote (quoting from Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*), "—the world-encompassing France is slowly consuming herself in the fire of contemplated retribution—while on the other hand, centralised, young and mighty Germany has begun her upward march above the horizon with rapid strides.... Germany is fast multiplying her population, and is exceptionally hardy. Today Germany is the dictator to all Europe, her place is above all!... The German army is the foremost in reputation, and Germany has vowed to become foremost in her navy also. German manufacture of commodities has beaten even England!"²

The train reached Vienna on the evening of October 25, and there—after the splendid disembarkment of two archdukes, who were met by a guard of officers "in laced uniforms" and soldiers "with feathered caps"—Swamiji's party was allowed to alight. Their luggage was searched for tobacco (a procedure gone through at every border and, presumably, at any point of destination); they paid whatever duty was charged and took a waiting carriage to a hotel, where reservations had been made in advance.³ (The Loysons did not stop over in Vienna but went straight through to Constantinople.)

In their memoirs, Swamiji and Miss MacLeod differ in

HOMeward BOUND

regard to the length of time spent at various places. According to Miss MacLeod, they stayed in Vienna for two days; according to Swamiji, for three days, which, he wrote, "were sufficient to tire me." Two days or three, they were spent for the most part in sight-seeing—going through the Schönbrunn Palace, the Museum, the Art Gallery. Of such places, Swamiji enjoyed most the Scientific Museum, "an institution of great benefit to the student." But there was nothing, perhaps, that was not of interest to him and upon which he could not throw a good deal of light.

To travel with Swamiji must have been an education in itself. To him the past was a living part of the present, and in the present he clearly read the future. Indeed, he seemed to see man's history on earth as a vast, animated tapestry of inter-related figures, some dark, some bright, some seething with vitality, some lying for the time quiescent, others charging over the edge of destruction. His informed analysis of European politics and power struggles, of trends and undercurrents, was as lucid and detached as though he were viewing his age from some far future time. The Schönbrunn Palace, for instance, put him in mind of the whole pageant of Austrian history—its powerful, prestigious, and glamorous past, its declining present, and its probable eclipse in the future. The Palace put Swamiji in mind also of Napoleon, who, though asserting that he would originate a mighty dynasty of his own, was yet careful to marry the daughter of the Emperor of Austria. And thus, Swamiji writes, "that hero fell into this abyss of family prestige"—a Hapsburg abyss that swallowed his only son, the "Young Eagle," holding him virtually a prisoner in the Palace until, brokenhearted, he died. This was *l'Aiglon*, the hero of Edmond Rostand's play, over whose tragic fate Sarah Bernhardt was currently making all Paris weep.

Swamiji, whose eyes saw things precisely as they were, had no illusions in regard to the state of Western civilization. While many idealists of that period were happy in the thought that the rationality, moral uprightness, and general excellence

of European culture precluded the very possibility of war, he saw that a large-scale war was not only possible but probable. Europe was, in fact, armed to the teeth with all manner of modern weapons, including Hiram Maxim's deadly machine gun; conscription (except in England) was universal. "Throughout Europe there is a craze for soldiers—soldiers everywhere," he wrote. "In the present times, a huge wave of nationalism is sweeping over Europe, where people speaking the same tongue, professing the same religion and belonging to the same race want to unite together. Wherever such union is being effectively accomplished, there is great power being manifested; and where this is impossible, death is inevitable. After the death of the present Austrian Emperor [Franz Josef I, who died in 1916], Germany will surely try to absorb the German-speaking portion of the Austrian Empire—and Russia and others are sure to oppose her; so there is the possibility of a dreadful war." It was a prophecy fulfilled in its essential points to the letter.

"Vienna," Swamiji wrote, "is a small city after the model of Paris." Yet Paris was Paris, and no other city could compare. "To visit Europe after Paris is like tasting an inferior preparation after a sumptuous feast—that dress, and style of eating, that same fashion everywhere; throughout the land you meet with that same black suit, and the same queer hat—disgusting! Besides, you have clouds above, and this swarm of people with black hats and black coats below—one feels suffocated, as it were." In the respectable uniformity of Europe he saw inevitable decay, a fate worse, perhaps, and more irreparable, than war. "It is a law of nature," he wrote, "that such [samenesses] are the symptoms of death." India, he pointed out, provided an example of people following the same customs for centuries and gradually becoming thereby mere automata. "The Europeans too will share the same fate! '...They will become like so many machines, will gradually tread the path their forefathers have trod,' and as an inevitable consequence of that—they will rot and die!"

HOMeward BOUND

On the evening of October 28, the party again boarded the *Orient Express* and traveled for two nights and a day through the Balkan countries to Constantinople. The train stopped for a time, allowing the passengers to alight, in various cities along the way, such as Budapest, which Swamiji found "very neat and beautiful," and Belgrade. But for the most part, sight-seeing was done from the train windows. The ragged, mud-hut poverty of the Balkan countryside reminded Swamiji of India—though in some respects he found it worse. "As they are Christians," he wrote, "they must have a number of hogs; and a single hog will make a place more dirty than two hundred barbarous men will be able to do." Yet this poverty was worth the freedom it was paying for. "Freedom with but one meal a day and tattered rags on, is a million times better than slavery in gold chains. A slave suffers the miseries of hell both here and hereafter." It was clear to Swamiji, however, that the precious, hard-won and costly freedom of the Balkan countries was to be short-lived. "After much bloodshed," he wrote of Serbia and Bulgaria, "they have thrown off the yoke of Turkey; but along with this they have got a serious disadvantage—they must construct their army after the European model, otherwise the existence of not one of them is safe for a day. Of course, sooner or later they will all one day be absorbed by Russia."

In the Hungarian peasant he saw the serpent-worshipping nomads of Turkestan, those ancient tribes of central Asia that had moved down into India centuries earlier, conquering the land and absorbing the religion of Buddhism, and whose homeland had in turn been permeated with Buddhism and Hinduism. Later, other tribes from the area north of Kashmir had moved west, one section going north of the Caspian Sea into Europe, where they had founded the kingdom of Hungary and had become Christians; another section wandering along the south shore of the Caspian into Persia and Asia Minor, where in time they had become Mohammedans. The latter were to invade India in hordes, destroying the ancient culture

that they had once, in forgotten days, revered and made their own. Here was a tale of many strands, which Swamiji not only wrote of in his *Memoirs* but perhaps brought to life for his traveling companions as the *Orient Express* crossed Hungary, in whose Christianity, he said, "one may even now trace on research the strata of serpent worship and of Buddhism."

Swamiji's *Memoirs*, as published in the *Udbodhan*, end with him discovering in the Balkan countries—to his surprise and no doubt to his delight—chilies so hot as "to beat even your Madrasis." The remaining portion, as published in the *Complete Works*, consists, the editor tells us, in "jottings... found among Swamiji's papers." It is from these "Addenda" that one can follow him in Constantinople and thence to Athens.

If I have calculated correctly, the *Orient Express* arrived in Constantinople (now Istanbul) on the morning of Tuesday, October 30. How many days Swamiji and his party remained here is not certain. According to the *Memoirs*, their stay seems to have lasted only two or three days; but according to Miss MacLeod, they stopped over for nine days—and this, I would think, is the more probable length of time.

That ancient center of two great empires—Byzantine and, later, Ottoman—with its layers of religious history and culture, could not but have been of interest to Swamiji, yet his notes tell very little of his stay there. On their arrival, the travelers had "great trouble" with the octroi, or local tax officers, who, searching for seditious literature as well as for tobacco, entered into a quarrel with Mme Calvé and Jules Bois over their books. In the end, two books were confiscated. That matter settled, the party took a carriage and saw the town—old and new. "In the evening," Swamiji writes, "we went to visit Woods Pasha." One is tempted to guess that this Woods Pasha, whom one meets again in Scutari, was none other than our friend Jules Bois. He was perhaps staying at a different hotel, making it necessary for visits to be paid back and forth. Indeed, in Constantinople the party seems to have been somewhat inconveniently scattered. One finds Swamiji and Miss MacLeod hiring a boat

HOMeward BOUND

on the extremely cold and windy second day of their visit and crossing the Bosphorus in order to call on Père Hyacinthe who, with his wife, had arrived in Constantinople ahead of the others and who was staying at the American College of Girls at Scutari (now Üsküdar). Swamiji and the crusading ex-monk had a long talk about American colleges, which, in view of the setting, was a natural enough subject to have picked.

"The police," Swamiji wrote, "have prohibited Père Hyacinthe's lectures; so I too cannot lecture." But one learns from *A Bosphorus Adventure* by Mary Mills Patrick (which is quoted in "Swami Vivekananda and Père Hyacinthe Loyson" by Swami Vidyatmananda) that the government did not prevent the immensely popular Père Hyacinthe from lecturing at the college.⁴ Nor, accordingly, did Swamiji feel reluctant to lecture on Hinduism in the college chapel on Friday, November 2. This last piece of information comes from an entry in Père Hyacinthe's journal, portions of which are quoted for the first time in Swami Vidyatmananda's article.⁵

According to the *Life*, Swamiji spoke also in Constantinople: "Several private conversazioni and drawing-room lectures were . . . arranged for him at which he spoke on the religion of Vedanta to select audiences." Some of these talks were perhaps arranged by the French chargé d'affaires, whom, the *Life* tells us, Swamiji met, together with other notables, through the introductory letters of Hiram Maxim.⁶

Dear Alberta [Swamiji wrote from Constantinople on a picture postcard], How are you? I am having a grand Turkish time. Yours,⁷ Vivekananda.

This message, which Swamiji wrote in evident good spirits on November 1, has not heretofore been published, but it is, as far as I know, his only available correspondence for the entire trip—except for a published letter written from Port Tewfik, to which I shall refer later. One could, of course, call Swamiji's *Memoirs* a correspondence of sorts, and indeed, the writing of

this travel-letter for the *Udbodhan* must have left him little time in Constantinople, where he wrote most of the last part, for anything but a postcard or two.

According to a cautious notation in the *Brahmavadin* of December 1900, Swamiji "appears to have left Constantinople on the 10th November for Athens."⁸ And from the "Addenda" to his *Memoirs* one learns a few details about the trip to Greece. For instance, the travelers, who still numbered four (Père Hyacinthe and his wife remained in Constantinople), left the city at ten in the morning (Swamiji does not mention the date) and sailed on placid waters for a day and a night across the Sea of Marmara, putting in once at an island to visit an Orthodox Greek monastery. They sailed on through the Dardanelles and into the Aegean, where, on the shore of another island, they came upon the ruins of a temple, dedicated, Swamiji guessed, to the god of the sea. From there they sailed to Port Piraeus (near Athens), where the voyage ended.

The party stayed in Greece for three or four days (Swamiji says three, Miss MacLeod says four), seeing all that should be seen: the Acropolis, the Parthenon, the Temple of Zeus, the Theater of Dionysus. On a separate day, they visited the town of Eleusis, where in ancient times the sacred rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries had been celebrated. During his visits to the Louvre in Paris, Swamiji had learned a great deal about Greek art and its different periods—a knowledge which must have added to his and his companions' pleasure. The wonderful talks would have gone on; there was simply no end to what Swamiji knew, and all of it he could make fascinating.

Possibly it was on November 12 or 13 that the party left Athens, boarding the Russian ship the *Czar* and setting sail for Egypt. At this point the *Memoirs* come to an end; but it is just at this point that Mme Calvé takes up the story, giving us a glimpse of Swamiji in Cairo.

(In Emma Calvé's autobiography, *My Life*, one finds a section devoted to her acquaintance with Swamiji, whom she speaks of as "a noble being, a saint, a philosopher and a true

HOMeward BOUND

friend, [whose] influence upon my spiritual life was profound....” The first part of this section pertains to her meeting with him in Chicago and has been quoted in the *Life*.⁹ The remaining portion, which tells something of the trip during which Swamiji was her guest, can be found in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*.¹⁰ I have taken the following extract, however, from the *Saturday Evening Post* of September 9, 1922, where it was first published, translated by Rosamond Gilder.):

With the swami and some of his friends and followers I went upon a most remarkable trip, through Turkey, Egypt and Greece. Our party included the swami; Father Hyacinthe Loyson; his wife, a Bostonian; Miss McL., of Chicago, ardent swamist and charming, enthusiastic woman; and myself, the song bird of the troupe. [Miss MacLeod was more of New York than of Chicago; and Mme Calvé forgets that Jules Bois was also a member of the party. I mention these inaccuracies only that the record may be kept straight.]

What a pilgrimage it was! Science, philosophy and history had no secrets from the swami. I listened with all my ears to the wise and learned discourse that went on around me. I did not attempt to join in their arguments, but I sang on all occasions, as is my custom. [It is said that Swamiji liked her to sing for him the rousing ‘Marschallaise.’] The swami would discuss all sorts of questions with Father Loyson, who was a scholar and a theologian of repute. It was interesting to see that the swami was able to give the exact text of a document, the date of a church council, when Father Loyson himself was not certain....

When we were in Greece we visited Eleusis. He explained its mysteries to us and led us from altar to altar, from temple to temple, describing the processions that were held in each place, intoning the ancient prayers, showing us the priestly rites.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Later, in Egypt, one unforgettable night, he led us again into the past, speaking to us in mystic, moving words, under the shadow of the silent Sphinx.

The swami was always absorbingly interesting, even under ordinary conditions. He fascinated his hearers with his magic tongue. Again and again we would miss our train, sitting calmly in a station waiting room, enthralled by his discourse and quite oblivious to the lapse of time. Even Miss McL., the most sensible among us, would forget the hour and we would in consequence find ourselves stranded far from our destination at the most inconvenient times and places.

One day we lost our way in Cairo. I suppose we had been talking too intently. At any rate, we found ourselves in a squalid, ill-smelling street, where half-clad women lolled from windows and sprawled on doorsteps.

The swami noticed nothing until a particularly noisy group of women on a bench in the shadow of a dilapidated building began laughing and calling to him. One of the ladies of our party tried to hurry us along, but the swami detached himself gently from our group and approached the women on the bench.

"Poor children!" he said. "Poor creatures! They have put their divinity in their beauty. Look at them now!" [According to Mme Calvé's account of this incident to her friend Mme Paul Verdier, Swamiji's words were: "Poor child, she has forgotten who she is and has put her divinity into her body."]

He began to weep, as Jesus might have done before the woman taken in adultery. The women were silenced and abashed. One of them leaned forward and kissed the hem of his robe, murmuring brokenly in Spanish, "*Hombre de Dios, hombre de Dios!*" (Man of God!) Another, with a sudden gesture of modesty and fear, threw her arm in front of her face as though she would screen her shrinking soul from those pure eyes.

HOMeward BOUND

This marvelous journey proved to be almost the last occasion on which I was to see the swami. Shortly afterward he announced that he was to return to his own country. He felt that his end was approaching and he wished to go back to the community of which he was director and where he had spent his youth....

It should be mentioned that Emma Calvé and Josephine MacLeod each told Mme Paul Verdier, who knew them both well, more details in regard to Swamiji's departure for his Motherland than are to be found in their respective memoirs. I quote directly from Mme Verdier's notes, which she has generously supplied:

According to what both Josephine MacLeod and Calvé told me Calvé met the party in Egypt where she had an engagement to sing. It is possible that she had left the party somewhere en route, and joined it again in Egypt. When she arrived, Miss MacLeod told her that she would find Swamiji in a sad, depressed mood. Calvé asked what the matter was, and Tantine said, "He wants to go back to India." So Calvé saw Swamiji and found him sad. Calvé was very outspoken and free. She asked him why he felt sad, and he answered that he wanted to go back to India to be with his brother monks. At these words, Calvé answered, "Why, Swamiji, if it is only that, I'll pay your fare; it is nothing! But why do you want to leave us?"

Then his eyes filled with tears, he was so moved by her spontaneous generosity. (She was very generous, like the great artist that she was.) And he told her then—these are her words to me—"I want to go back to India to die and want to be with my brothers." She was aghast and said something like—"But Swamiji you cannot die, we need you"—I forget her exact words. Then he said he would die the 4th of July....

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Later Calvé accepted a singing engagement which took her over the world. She told me that she particularly wanted to go to India, as she wanted to check *herself* on the date of Swamiji's death. She found that just as he had told her (so she said) he died on the 4th of July.¹¹

Whatever reason Swamiji may have had for returning to India—and there appears to have been more than one reason—his decision had been an unexpected one. At Luxor and Karnak, up the Nile, lay the ruins of ancient Thebes, which Miss MacLeod wanted to visit. But Swamiji was not tempted. He longed suddenly for his Motherland, and Joe, as she later told her niece Frances Leggett, who has written of the incident in *Late and Soon*, made no effort to detain him.¹² Coming to Joe one morning in Cairo, Swamiji said to her, "I must leave immediately. I must go back to India." And, as she later told it, she had answered with a full, though regretful heart, "Yes, go." It was after this, of course, that Mme Calvé, also with a full heart, made his return possible.

(That is the way Miss MacLeod looked back upon this occasion, and the way she wrote of it in her memoirs. But as she related it at the time—in a letter to Mrs. Bull which I shall give in a moment—it was not so much a full heart as lack of energy that prevented her from detaining Swamiji. There is no doubt, however, that her heart *was* full, for such was her nature. Seeing his desire to return to India, she would not have tried to detain him, even if she could have—which possibility is indeed highly doubtful. Swamiji was suddenly certain of his next move; nothing would have kept him from making it.)

It is said that he had a strong intuition that Captain Sevier was dying and that this made him anxious to hurry home. More probably, for Captain Sevier had actually died almost a month earlier, belated *news* of his illness caught up with the travelers in Egypt, and Swamiji knew through ordinary channels that the time was short. Captain James Henry Sevier and his wife, Charlotte, were the English disciples of whom he

HOMeward BOUND

had written to Sister Nivedita in July of 1897 (before her first journey to India): "the Seviars are the *only* English people who do not hate the *natives*... Mr. and Mrs. Sevier are the only persons who did not come to patronise us."¹³ They had gone to India with Swamiji at the end of 1896, and there they had remained, dedicating their lives to his work. In 1898 they had bought the land at Mayavati where the Advaita Ashrama was to be located and had lived there, improving the grounds and helping to establish the center. Captain Sevier (he was a retired army captain) had died on October 28, 1900, the day Swamiji had left Vienna. But there was no way for Swamiji to know that he was already too late.

There was perhaps another, more compelling reason for his longing to return to India—a reason to which he had given words months earlier when he had written to Joe from Alameda: "Now I again hear his voice; the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless—the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling.—'I come, Lord, I come.'—'Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou Me.' 'I come, my beloved Lord, I come.' Yes, I come. Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath."¹⁴ Had not that voice gone on calling? Now, so close to Asia—the air of the East surrounding him—Swamiji could care for nothing but to turn his steps homeward.

A heretofore unpublished letter from Miss MacLeod to Mrs. Bull speaks of his sudden decision and departure. The letter was dated "Thanksgiving," which fell on November 29. It read in part:

Thanksgiving on The Nile.

Dearest S. S—

Your postal card from Paris reached me just now, telling of Mrs. Alcock's illness. [Mrs. Alcock was a relative of Mrs. Bull's]... I am *alone* on The Nile. Swamiji returned to India on Sunday last—& is due there *Dec. 6th the full-moon—*

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

He was eager to go—& I was too poorly to urge him to stay—even Luxor & Karnac failed to induce him to remain over—

Mlle. Calvé is in Cairo—but joins me in a day or so—to go to Assouan, the first Cataract—

I may remain in Southern Egypt some time—I have no plans.—I am somewhat better but feel it will take the entire winter in quiet to recoup—

The Nile service under Cook is delightful—we are only 14 passengers—taking 12 days to go up to the first Cataract—have some excursion on donkeys every day...

Mr. Bois is in Luxor, & goes to Palestine, before returning to Paris. We all had just one month together.

...

I had a letter from Mr. Sturdy.

Do write me some news—gossip—anything!! Isn't that a good sign [of returning health]?

Swamiji was not very well—had another heart attack—& was radiant about going to India—bless him—

I've had a sweet letter from Margot.

Lovingly as ever¹⁵ Jojo

As far as I know, Miss MacLeod's information that Swamiji had had a heart attack—and this not the first—is the only word we have on the subject. But she mentions these attacks so casually that one can barely believe they were serious, if they were heart attacks at all. In any event, Swamiji does not appear to have been particularly ill at this point in his trip.

(It should be mentioned, however, that there is no known photograph of Swamiji at this period by which we might guess at his state of health. The two photographs sometimes said to have been taken in Constantinople and Cairo, perhaps because he wears in both a fezlike hat, were actually taken before March 18, 1900; for on that date a line drawing unquestionably based on one of them was published in the *San Francisco Examiner*.)

HOMeward BOUND

It would seem that Swamiji traveled overland from Cairo, or from nearby El Giza, to Port Tewfick (or Tawfiq) near Suez at the south end of the Suez Canal. From there he was to board a steamer to Bombay (the Italian *Rubattino*, coming from Naples). The ship, as it happened, was late, but inasmuch as there was some confusion about his ticket, the delay was fortunate. "Mr. Gaze's agent gave me all the wrong directions," he is quoted in the *Complete Works* as writing from Port Tewfick to Miss MacLeod. "In the first place, there was nobody here to tell me a thing, not to speak of receiving me. . . . It was good one way, therefore, that the steamer was late; so I went to see the agent of the steamer and he told me to exchange Gaze's pass for a regular ticket. [One suspects that this Mr. Gaze was not a man but the city of El Giza.] I hope to board the steamer some time tonight. I am well and happy and am enjoying the fun immensely. How is Mademoiselle [Miss MacLeod herself?]? Where is Bois? Give my everlasting gratitude and good wishes to Mme Calvé. She is a good lady."¹⁶

As far as we know, Swamiji did indeed board the ship that night and sail away down the Gulf of Suez into the Red Sea, headed for home at last. The date was November 26, 1900.

His departure astonished everyone. But the ripple of news spread over the world as slowly as a ship's passage; it would not reach India before Swamiji himself.

6

For Swamiji the voyage of eleven or twelve days to India was uneventful, but for at least one of his fellow passengers, a nonplussed American missionary by the name of Reeves Calkins, it was a voyage not soon to be forgotten. Mr. Calkins's memories of his talks with Swamiji and of Swamiji's easy squelching of an ill-advised conspiracy of passengers to get the better of him in debate can be found in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, there reprinted from the March 1923 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, which magazine had taken the article

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

from a Bombay journal. It is a valuable account, for Swamiji's gigantic personality bursts all the bounds of Mr. Calkins's prejudice. Despite himself, the missionary portrayed the great soul and vast heart of the Hindu monk. One sees brilliance flashing from him in debate; his answers to those who attempted to "draw" him "sparkled with epigram and apt quotation"; at the table "his conversation was like Ganga at high flood." But at other times—walking on the deck at night in friendship with the missionary—Swamiji seems to have been barely able to keep his mind on a level where talk of any kind was possible. "The mysticism of Vivekananda was a fascination and wonder," Mr. Calkins wrote. "For it was not affected. When our conversation touched, as it was bound to, on the hidden things of the spirit, his heavy eyelids would droop slowly and he wandered, even in my presence, into some mystic realm where I was not invited."¹

The *Rubattino*, late at Port Tewfick, was no doubt late at Bombay as well, docking perhaps on December 6 or 7. The connections with the train to Calcutta, which Swamiji would take as far as Howrah, were not good, and thus he had a wait of many hours at the railway station. Traveling incognito and in European dress, he was not recognized—except by one man, a professor from Madras. It was because of this chance encounter (which has not, I believe, been heretofore known of) that one learns of a view in connection with his work that he had perhaps arrived at during his visit to England. Many years later, in the early twenties, the professor told a young monk at the Ramakrishna Math in Madras of that meeting. He had never before spoken with Swamiji, but had heard his lectures in Madras in February of 1897 and had been much impressed by their fire and boldness of spirit. Astonished to find the Swami in a Bombay railway station, he approached him, saluted him, and told him how deeply stirred he had been by his heroic, vitalizing ideas. They fell to talking, and during the course of conversation the man asked Swamiji about his work in London. Swamiji's reply voiced a conviction that has

HOMeward BOUND

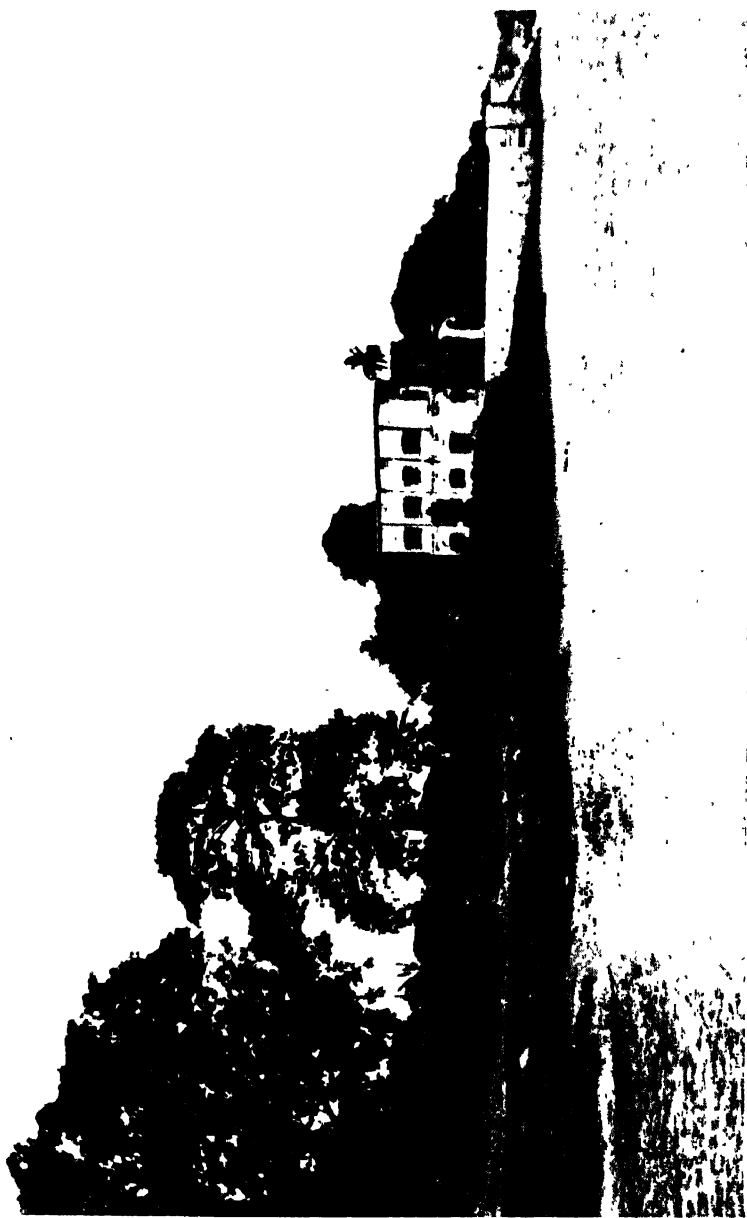
not, as far as I know, been recorded elsewhere. He no doubt spoke with emphasis, for his words etched themselves indelibly upon the professor's mind. "Until India becomes politically free," Swamiji said, "there is not the slightest chance that our religion will be appreciated by the English people. Not the slightest chance."²

The story of Swamiji's totally unexpected appearance at the Belur Math on the evening of Sunday, December 9, is well known to the readers of his biographies. I have had the good fortune, however, to see an unpublished eye-witness account of that memorable event, which differs in some details from the published versions. At the beginning of this book I mentioned the Indian journal kept by Swami Chidrupananda in 1934 and 1935. During the course of his stay at Belur Math, the Swami (then Alfred Clifton) often had long talks with Swami Shuddhananda, and these talks he promptly wrote down in his journal while memory was still fresh. It was on a moonlit night in January of 1935 that Swami Shuddhananda, walking back and forth across the court of the Math with the young American, told of Swamiji's homecoming on that evening so many years before. The bell had been rung at the Math for supper, he related, and the sannyasins and brahmacharins had gathered in the dining hall, when a servant came running in to announce that a European gentleman, a sahib, had vaulted the low wall (as it was in those early days), had walked hurriedly across the field, and was even then approaching the building! What European would act in this informal, urgent fashion, and what could his business be? Some of the swamis went outside to inquire. And then suddenly, when they saw who the sahib was, an incredulous, joyful cry went up. It was at this point that Swami Shuddhananda (then a young brahmacharin) also went outside. "He was standing right over there," he said, pointing out a spot just in front of the building where Sri Ram. Krishna's relics were enshrined. "When I saw all the others saluting him, I came

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

closer and discovered who it was. Then I, too, saluted him. He had come by carriage from the Howrah station and on the way had heard the dinner bell. He said he was afraid that if he did not jump the wall there would be no dinner left. We took him into the dining hall [to the vast surprise and joy of the monks still seated there]. A place was prepared for him, and he was served his supper [a heaping plate of his favorite khichuri], and he told us about his trip.”³ Indeed it is said in other accounts that, surrounded once again by his beloved brother monks and his disciples, Swamiji talked late into the night, telling of his trip, telling of many things—a talk certainly full of treasure, but one which nobody, so overjoyed were they all, managed to record.

Thus Swami Vivekananda, the World Teacher who ‘nad given his light fully, unstintingly to man, who had given enough, he said, for fifteen hundred years, came home at last, his journey done.



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APPENDIX

LECTURES AND LECTURE SERIES

DELIVERED BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
DURING HIS SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Date	Title	Place
LOS ANGELES, 1899-1900		
Fri. Dec. 8	"Hindu Religion and Philosophy"	Blanchard Hall
Tues. Dec. 12	"The Cosmos"	Unity Church
Tues. Dec. 19	"Applied Psychology—I"	Blanchard Building
Thurs. Dec. 21	"Applied Psychology—II"	Home of Truth
Fri. Dec. 22	"Applied Psychology—III"	Home of Truth
	"The Mind and Its Powers"	
Mon. Dec. 25	"Christ's Message to the World"	Home of Truth, 10 A.M.
Tues. Dec. 26	Title unknown	
Wed. Dec. 27	"Theory of Concentration"	
Thurs. Dec. 28	"Practice of Concentration"	
Fri. Dec. 29	"Spiritual Breathing" ("Hints on Practical Spirituality")	
Sat. Dec. 30	"Reincarnation"	
Tues. Jan. 2	Title unknown	Payne's Hall, 10 A.M.
Wed. Jan. 3	Title unknown	
Thurs. Jan. 4	"What Brings Success" ("Work and Its Secret")	
Fri. Jan. 5	"We Ourselves" ("The Open Secret")	
Sat. Jan. 6	Title unknown	
Tues. Jan. 2	"India and Its People"	Blanchard Hall, 8 P.M.
Sat. Jan. 6	"The History of India"	
Sun. Jan. 7	"Christ's Message to the World" ("Christ the Messenger")	Payne's Hall, 2.30 P.M.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Date	Title	Place
Mon. Jan. 8	"Applied Psychology"	Payne's Hall, 8 P.M.
Wed. Jan. 10	"The Powers of the Mind"	
Thurs. Jan. 11	(Canceled; title unknown)	
	(Canceled; title unknown)	
Fri. Jan. 12	Class	Mrs. Blodgett's house
PASADENA, 1900		
Sun. Jan. 14	Informal Talk	Echo Mountain house
Mon. Jan. 15	"Bhakti Yoga"	Green Hotel, 10 A.M.
Wed. Jan. 17	Title unknown	
Fri. Jan. 19	Title unknown	
Tues. Jan. 16	Religious Legends	Shakespeare Club, 8 P.M.
Thurs. Jan. 18	"Women of India"	
Sat. Jan. 20	"Persian Art"	Shakespeare Club Reception, 3-5 P.M.
Mon. Jan. 22	"The Ideal of a Universal Religion"	Shakespeare Club, 10 A.M.
Wed. Jan. 24	Title unknown	
Thurs. Jan. 25	"The Science of Yoga"	
Fri. Jan. 26	Title unknown	
Sat. Jan. 27	"My Life and Mission"	
Sun. Jan. 28	"The Universal Religion"	Universalist Church, 8 P.M.
Tues. Jan. 30	"The Aryan Race"	Shakespeare Club, evening
Wed. Jan. 31	"The Ramayana"	
Thurs. Feb. 1	"The Mahabharata"	
Fri. Feb. 2	"Buddhistic India"	
Sat. Feb. 3	"The Great Teachers of the World"	
Unknown	"Jada Bharata"	Unknown
Unknown	"Prahlada"	Unknown

APPENDIX

Date	Title	Place
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, 1900		
Fri. Feb. 23	"The Ideal of a Universal Religion"	Golden Gate Hall, San Francisco, evening
Sun. Feb. 25	"The Claims of Vedantism on the Modern World"	First Unitarian Church, Oakland, evening
Wed. Feb. 28	"Vedanta and Christianity"	
Sun. Mar. 4 •	"The Science of Religion"	Golden Gate Hall, San Francisco, 3 P.M.
Mon. Mar. 5	"India and Its People"	Washington Hall,
Tues. Mar. 6	"Arts and Sciences"	Red Men's Bldg., S.F.
Fri. Mar. 9	"Ideals of India"	
Wed. Mar. 7	"The Laws of Life and Death"	Wendte Hall,
Thurs. Mar. 8	"The Reality and the Shadow"	Oakland, evening
Mon. Mar. 12	"The Way to Salvation"	
Sunday Series		
Sun. Mar. 11	"Christ's Message to the World"	Golden Gate Hall, S.F.
Sun. Mar. 18	"Buddha's Message to the World"	Union Square Hall, S.F.
Sun. Mar. 25	"Mohammed"	Union Square Hall
Sun. Apr. 1	"Krishna and His Message"	Union Square Hall
Sun. Apr. 8	"Is Vedanta the Future Religion?"	Union Square Hall
"Applied Psychology"		
Tues. Mar. 13	"The Mind, Its Powers and Possibilities"	Washington Hall, S.F., 8 P.M.
Thurs. Mar. 15	"Mind Culture"	
Fri. Mar. 16	"Concentration"	
Mon. Mar. 19	"The Manners and Customs of India"	Wendte Hall, Oakland, 8 P.M.
Mon. Mar. 26	"The Arts and Sciences in India"	
Mon. Apr. 2	"Ideals of India"	

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Date	Title	Place
Tues. Mar. 20	"The Vedanta Philosophy"	Washington Hall, S.F., 8 P.M.
Fri. Mar. 23	"Nature and Man" ("I Am That I Am")	
Tues. Mar. 27	"The Soul and God"	
	"The Goal"	
Wed. Mar. 21	"Mind—Its Powers and Possibilities"	Mrs. George H.
Thurs. Mar. 22	"Mind Culture" (?)	Perry's house,
Wed. Mar. 26	"Concentration of Mind" (?)	Alameda Cheney section
Thurs. Mar. 29	"Science of Breathing"	Washington Hall,
Tues. Apr. 3	"Meditation"	S.F., 8 P.M.
Thurs. Apr. 5	"Practical Religion: Breathing and Meditation"	
Fri. Mar. 30	"Discipleship"	Washington Hall, S.F.
Unknown	Title unknown	Home of Truth, Pine St., S.F.
Unknown	Title unknown	Home of Truth, Cali- fornia St., S.F.
Wed. Apr. 4	"Influence of Surroundings on the Development of Religion"	Tucker Hall, Alameda, evening
Fri. Apr. 6	"The Formation of God Ideals"	
Wed. Apr. 11	"Man's Ultimate Destiny"	
Mon. Apr. 9	"Worshiper and Worshiped"	Washington Hall,
Tues. Apr. 10	"Formal Worship"	S. F., 8 P.M.
Thurs. Apr. 12	"Divine Love" ("Devotion and Love")	
Fri. Apr. 13	"Raja Yoga"	Tucker Hall,
Mon. Apr. 16	"Concentration and Breathing"	Alameda, 8 P.M.
Wed. Apr. 18	"The Practice of Religion"	
Sat. Apr. 14	"Bhakti Yoga" (beginning a "short series" of lectures?)	Social Hall, Red Men's Bldg., S.F.
Unknown	Title unknown	Home of Truth, Alameda
Unknown	Title unknown	Home of Truth, Alameda

APPENDIX

Date	Title	Place
Thurs. May 24	"The Gita"	Dr. Logan's office, 6 Geary St., S.F.
Sat. May 26	"The Gita—I"	Dr. Logan's house,
Mon. May 28	"The Gita—II"	770 Oak St., S.F.
Tues. May 29	"The Gita—III"	
NEW YORK, 1900		
Sun. June 10	"Vedanta Philosophy"	Vedanta Society of New York
Sun. June 17	"What Is Religion?"	
Sun. June 24	"Mother Worship"	
Sun. July 1	"The Source of Religion"	
Sat. June 9, 16, 23, 30	Classes on the Gita	
PARIS, 1900		
Fri. Aug. 24	"La Religion et la philosophie des Hindous" ("Hindu Religion and Philosophy")	Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Francis H. Leggett, 6 place des Etats Unis
Fri. Sept. 7	Two talks at the Paris Congress of the History of Religions	The Sorbonne

ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORT FORMS USED IN THE NOTES

<i>Complete Works</i>	<i>The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda</i> , 8 vols., centenary ed., 1963
FHL	Mrs. Frances Leggett, New York
<i>History RKMM</i>	<i>History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission</i> , by Swami Gambhirananda, 1st ed., 1957
<i>Letters</i>	<i>Letters of Swami Vivekananda</i> , 4th ed., 1948
<i>Life</i>	<i>The Life of Swami Vivekananda</i> , by His Eastern and Western Disciples, 4th ed., 1949
<i>P.B.</i>	<i>Prabuddha Bharata</i> , Calcutta
<i>Rem.</i>	<i>Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda</i> , by His Eastern and Western Admirers, 1st ed., 1961
RKM	Ramakrishna Math
SCB	Sara Chapman Bull Papers
SN Col.	Swami Nikhilananda Collection
<i>Talks</i>	<i>Talks with Swami Vivekananda</i> , 2nd ed., 1946
<i>The Master</i>	<i>The Master as I Saw Him</i> , by Sister Nivedita, 6th ed., 1948
<i>V and W</i>	<i>Vedanta and the West</i> , Vedanta Society of Southern California
VSNC	Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco
<i>With the Swamis</i>	<i>With the Swamis in America</i> , by A Western Disciple [Br. Gurudasa, later Swami Atulananda], 2d ed., 1946

(When the place and date of publication are not cited for the following references, they are given in the Bibliography.)

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE: SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WEST

1

(Pages 1 to 17)

1. *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, 2d ed. (1946), p. 217.
2. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, 4th ed. (1948), p. 418.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, centenary edition (1963), 8:444. (Throughout the book, all references to the *Complete Works* are to the centenary edition, 1963.)
5. Alfred T. Clifton (Swami Chidrupananda), "One Hundred Days in India," Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco.
6. *Letters*, p. 428.
7. Charlotte E. Sevier to Josephine MacLeod, January 1, 1899, Swami Nikhilananda Collection, typed copies, VSNC.
8. Josephine MacLeod to Sara C. Bull, March 6, 1899, Sara C. Bull Papers.
9. Swami Saradananda to Josephine MacLeod, March 18, 1899, SCB.
10. Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated*, p. 161n.
11. Sister Nivedita to J. MacLeod, March 5-8, 1899, SCB.
12. "Notes of Conversations with Swami Turiyananda," *Prabuddha Bharata* 37 (May 1932): 209.
13. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, May 11, 1899, SCB.
14. Swami Saradananda to J. MacLeod, May 18, 1899, SCB.
15. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern and Western Disciples, 4th ed. (1949), p. 659.
16. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, June 7, 1899, Nivedita Papers, Ramakrishna Math, Belur, India.
17. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him*, 6th ed. (1948), p. 11.
18. Eric Hammond, "Sister Nivedita—an Impression of Early Years," *P.B.* 32 (December 1927): 558.
19. *Letters*, p. 408.
20. *Complete Works*, 8:447.
21. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 106.
22. *Complete Works*, 8:445.
23. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, February 7, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
24. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, see note 11 above.
25. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, May 21, 1899, SCB.
26. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, May 11, 1899, SCB.
27. Belur Math Diary, May 9, 1899, RKM, Belur.
28. *Ibid.*, June 17, 1899.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942), p. 449.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 986.
32. Belur Math Diary, June 17, 1899.
33. *Ibid.*, June 19, 1899.
34. *Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures*, p. 82.
35. Belur Math Diary, June 19, 1899.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Sachindranath Basu, "Swamijir

NOTES TO PAGES 15-40

Sannidhye" [In the Presence of Swamiji], *Udbodhan* 55 (Vaisakha, 1360 Bengali era): 185.

38. Belur Math Diary, March 4, 1899.
39. Ibid.
40. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, June 28, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
41. See note 38 above.

2

(Pages 17 to 29)

1. *Complete Works*, 7:308.
2. Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet*, p. 289.
3. Ibid., p. 293.
4. *Complete Works*, 7:303.
5. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 175.
6. *Complete Works*, 7:325.
7. Ibid., p. 305.
8. Nivedita, op. cit., p. 177.
9. *Complete Works*, 7:306.
10. *Life*, 1st ed. (1913), 3:364.
11. Ibid.
12. "Notes of Conversations with Swami Turiyananda," *P.B.* 37 (June 1932): 261.
13. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Sister Nivedita), p. 277.
14. *Complete Works*, 7: 332.
15. Ibid., pp. 332-33.
16. p. 334.
17. Ibid.
18. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 278.
19. Ibid.
20. Nivedita, *P. B.* 32 (July 1927): 326-27.
21. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, July 5, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
22. *Complete Works*, 7:339.
23. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, March 5-8, 1899, SCB
24. See note 21 above.

3

(Pages 29 to 36)

1. *Complete Works*, 7:340-43.
2. Ibid., p. 322.
3. p. 341.
4. p. 305.
5. pp. 341-42.
6. p. 345.
7. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, June 28, 1899, see sec. 2, note 13 above; unpublished portion from Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
8. Nivedita, *The Master*, pp. 174-78.
9. In a conversation with Swami Ashokananda, Sister Christine, an American disciple of Swamiji's, recalled times when Sister Nivedita had begged Swamiji to stop pouring out his thoughts so that she could write down what he had said. Such occasions were comparable to those aboard the *Golconda*.
10. Nivedita, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

4

(Pages 36 to 45)

1. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, July 5, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
2. *Complete Works*, 8:483.
3. Ibid., p. 494.
4. *Letters*, 4th ed., p. 444.
5. Ibid., p. 391.
6. Ibid., p. 362.
7. *Complete Works*, 8:494.
8. *Spiritual Talks* (Swami Turiyananda), p. 205.
9. Nivedita to Swami Akhandananda, August 10, 1899, *P.B.* 72 (June 1967): 243.
10. *Letters*, p. 379.
11. *Complete Works*, 8:430-32.
12. *Rem.* (K. S. Iyer), p. 107.

NOTES TO PAGES 42-58

13. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, March 26, 1897, SCB.
14. *Letters*, p. 390.
15. Swami Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, pp. 144-45; see also *Complete Works*, 6:419, and Swami Saradananda to Mrs. Bull, Nov. 16, 1899, June 14, 1900, SCB.
16. *Complete Works*, 8:456.
17. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, July 12, 1899, SCB.
18. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1899.
19. *Letters*, p. 429.
7. Sturdy to Sara Bull, October 3, 1896, SCB. Later in this paragraph it is said that Swami Saradananda and Mr. Goodwin had sailed for America on July 4, 1896. A more probable date is June 25.
8. *Letters*, p. 356.
9. *Complete Works*, 8:393.
10. *Life*, p. 452.
11. Sturdy to J. MacLeod, August 3, 1902, Frances Leggett.
12. *Complete Works*, 6:447.
13. *Ibid.*, 5:221.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
15. Sturdy to J. MacLeod, January 25, 1897, SN Col.
16. *Complete Works*, 8:399.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
18. p. 413.
19. p. 408.
20. p. 415.
21. *Letters*, p. 410.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Sturdy to Sara Bull, December 7, 1897, SCB.
24. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, April 4, 1898, SCB. Swamiji's reference in this letter to Mr. Sturdy's not "hugging and kissing its spokes of agony" is an allusion to a verse of Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*: "Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels,/ None other holds you that ye live and die,/And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss/Its spokes of agony,/Its tire of tears, its nave of nothingness" (Book the Eighth). Swamiji also quoted this verse in "Steps to Realisation," a class-lecture, 1896 (*C.W.* 1:407).

5

• (Pages 45 to 47)

1. *Complete Works*, 7:343.
2. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, July 13, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
3. *Complete Works*, 7:349.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 350-56.
5. p. 360.
6. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 184.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
8. *Complete Works*, 7:371.

CHAPTER TWO: ENGLAND AN INTERLUDE

1

(Pages 48 to 62)

1. *Complete Works*, 8:464.
2. Edward T. Sturdy to Swami Vivekananda, March 30, 1895, SCB.
3. Sturdy to J. MacLeod, January 18, 1903, SN Col.
4. Sturdy to Sara Bull, September, 1895, SCB.
5. *Letters*, 4th ed., p. 217.
6. *Complete Works*, 5:97.
25. Sturdy to J. MacLeod, October 18, 1898, SN Col.
26. Sturdy to J. MacLeod, March 21, 1899, SCB.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Letters*, p. 409.

NOTES TO PAGES 59-93

29. Charlotte Sevier to J. MacLeod, January 1, 1899, SN Col.
30. Sturdy to Sara Bull, April 13, 1899, SCB.
31. Sturdy to Sara Bull, April 16, 1899, SCB.
32. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, May 11, 1899, SCB.
33. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, June 21, 1899, SCB.
34. *Complete Works*, 8:464.
35. Sturdy to Sara Bull, July 8, 1899, SCB.
19. Mary C. Funke, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

3

(Pages 71 to 93)

2

(Pages 62 to 71)

1. Mary C. Funke, "The Master," in *Inspired Talks* by Swami Vivekananda (1939), pp. 25-26 passim.
2. *Complete Works*, 8:464.
3. Ibid., p. 465.
4. Mary C. Funke, op. cit., p. 33.
5. *Complete Works*, 8:465.
6. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, August 24, 1899, SCB.
7. Lewis G. Janes to Sara Bull, March 30, 1901, SCB.
8. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, August 6, 1899, SCB.
9. *Complete Works*, 8:438-40, passim.
10. Ibid., p. 443.
11. pp. 468-69.
12. p. 482.
13. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, November 16, 1899, SCB.
14. Lizelle Reymond, *Nivedita: Fille de l'Inde*, p. 177 (*The Dedicated*, p. 201).
15. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Lokamata Nivedita*, inserts following p. 464.
16. Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita*, p. 92.
17. *Rem.* (Sister Christine), pp. 163-64.
18. *Complete Works*, 8:467; bracketed sentence, ibid., 6:430.
1. Nivedita to Sturdy, August 24, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
2. Ibid.
3. *Letters*, p. 409.
4. Mrs. Ashton Jonson to J. MacLeod, July 23, 1899, SCB.
5. Sturdy to Nivedita, August 25, 1899, Nivedita papers, RKM, Belur.
6. Nivedita to Sara Bull and J. MacLeod, August 24, 1899, SCB.
7. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 3, 1899, SCB.
8. *Complete Works*, 8:470
9. *Letters*, 2d (new) ed. (1964), p. 467; unpublished portions from Vivekananda to Sturdy, September 14, 1899, Sturdy Papers, RKM, Bangalore.
10. Sturdy to Swami Vivekananda, October 1, 1899, Sturdy Papers, RKM, Bangalore; also SCB.
11. *Complete Works*, 8:478-79.
12. See note 6 above.
13. J. J. Goodwin to J. MacLeod, [spring] 1896. (Published in *Lokamata Nivedita* by S. P. Basu, inserts following p. 176.)
14. Sturdy to Swami Vivekananda, November 3, 1899, SN Col.
15. Swami Vivekananda to Sturdy, November [?], 1899, *Complete Works*, 7:511-15 (the quotation as given here is from SN Col.).
16. *Letters*, p. 467; *Complete Works*, 5:152.
17. *Complete Works*, 5:151.
18. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, May 30, 1906, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.

NOTES TO PAGES 94-116

CHAPTER THREE: RIDGELY MANOR: THE GREAT SUMMER

2

(Pages 107 to 112)

1

(Pages 94 to 106)

1. Josephine MacLeod to Sara Bull, August 17, 1899, SCB.
2. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, August 23, 1899, SCB.
3. "Vivekananda: Some New Findings," comp. the Editors, *Vedanta and the West* 16 (November-December 1953): 173.
4. Ibid.
5. The description of Ridgely as given here stems from Mrs. Frances Leggett's *Late and Soon* as well as from information kindly supplied by Miss Katherine Whitmarsh.
6. Ibid., pp. 114-15; see also note 3 above, p. 172.
7. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 23, 1899, SCB.
8. *Complete Works*, 8:474.
9. *Brahmavadin* 5 (January 1900): 172.
10. Swami Vivekananda to Isabelle McKindley, August 31, 1899, Swami Vishwananda Collection, VSNL.
11. J. MacLeod to Isabelle McKindley, August 31, 1899, Swami Vishwananda Col.
12. *Complete Works*, 8:473.
13. *P. B.* 4 (November 1899): 176.
14. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, September 1, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
15. Nivedita's Diary for 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
16. Besse Leggett to Sara Bull, September 19, 1899, SCB.
17. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 21, 1899, SCB.
18. *Complete Works*, 4:395-96.
19. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 23, 1899, SCB.

1. Sister Devamata, "Memories of India and Indians," *P.B.* 37 (June 1932): 304.
2. J. MacLeod to Sara C. Bull, September 3, 1899, SCB.
3. "Vivekananda: Some New Findings," Comp. the Editors, *Vand W* 16 (November-December 1953): 174.
4. *Brahmavadin* 4 (October 15, 1899): 815-16.
5. *Complete Works*, 8:472, 474.
6. See note 3 above, p. 175.
7. See note 3 above, p. 173; also Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 115.
8. Frances Leggett, op. cit., p. 88. This and all subsequent citations of *Late and Soon* refer to information contained therein, not to verbatim quotations.
9. See note 3 above.
10. *Rem.* (J. MacLeod), p. 246.
11. See note 3 above, p. 174.
12. See note 10 above.
13. M. L. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, 2d ed., pp. 64-65.
14. See note 3 above, p. 173.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. *Complete Works*, 8: 474.

3

(Pages 112 to 123)

1. *Rem.* (J. MacLeod), pp. 246-47.
2. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 3, 1899, SCB.
3. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), pp. 278-83 passim.
4. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, undated fragment, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
5. Swamiji wrote this poem on

NOTES TO PAGES 116-134

- Ridgely Manor stationery. The rendition given here was made directly from the facsimile of the original, as reproduced in *Vedanta Kesari*, May 1973, pp. 2-3.
6. See note 3 above, pp. 285-86.
 7. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, November 11, 1899, RKM, Belur.
 8. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 280.
 9. *Ibid.*
 10. p. 286.
 11. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Navabharat Publishers, forthcoming).
 12. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God, and Other Poems*, enl. ed. (1968), pp. 30, 89; see also *Complete Works*, 8: 170.
 13. J. MacLeod to Mary Hale, February [?], 1908, SN Col.
 14. See sec. 2, note 3, p. 172.
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. *Ibid.*
 17. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 281.
 18. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, October 2, 1899, SCB.
 19. Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated*, p. 207.
 20. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, November 11, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur; also quoted in *The Dedicated*, p. 211.
 21. A facsimile of this portion of Nivedita's letter is given in S. P. Basu's *Lokmata Nivedita*, inserts following p. 176.
 22. J. J. Goodwin to Sara Bull, November 1, 1896, SCB.
 23. *Letters*, p. 429.
 - 303, "New York Letter."
 2. *Brahmavadin* 4 (September 1899): 816, "The Vedanta Work."
 3. Anna Josephine Ingersoll, "The Swamis in America," *Arena*, October 1899, pp. 482-88.
 4. Horatio W. Dresser, "An Interpretation of the Vedanta," *Arena*, October 1899, pp. 489-508. Dresser was a leader of the New Thought movement.
 5. *Brahmavadin* 5 (February 1900): 304, "New York Letter."
 6. Diary of Swami Abhedananda, Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta.
 7. Swami Shankarananda, *Swami Abhedanander Jivankatha*, p. 234.
 8. Burke, *New Discoveries*, 2d ed., p. 425.
 9. *Complete Works*, 8:338-39.
 10. Leon Landsberg to Sara Bull, April 16, 1895, SCB.
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. *Rem.* (Sister Christine), p. 203.
 13. See note 10 above.
 14. Landsberg to Sara Bull, April 19, 1895, SCB.
 15. *Letters*, p. 227.
 16. Landsberg to Sara Bull, December 20, 1895, SCB.
 17. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1896.
 18. *Ibid.*, February 4 [?], 1896.
 19. *Complete Works*, 8:383, 385-86.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 409.
 21. Diary of Swami Abhedananda (March 27, 1898), see note 6 above. For Mr. Leggett's reaction see the *Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda*, vol. 10, pp. 30-31.
 22. See note 9 above.

1. *P.B.* 5 (February 1900): 28, "Vedanta Work in New York"; *Brahmavadin* 5 (February 1900):

1. *New York Tribune*, 11 November 1899.

NOTES TO PAGES 135-172

2. A Western Disciple [Br. Gurudasa, later Swami Atulananda], *With the Swamis in America*, 2d ed. (1946), pp. 79-82.
3. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, p. 153.
4. Notes of Mme Paul Verdier, copy VSNC.
5. Br. Gurudasa [later Swami Atulananda], "Swami Vivekananda's Mission to the West," *P.B.* 23 (April 1918): 85-86.
6. Ibid.
7. See note 2 above.
8. *Complete Works*, 8:338; for portion deleted in *Complete Works* see *P.B.* 54 (July 1949): 260.
9. *Letters*, p. 434.
10. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, November 12, 1899, VSNC.
11. *Complete Works*, 8:479-80.
12. Ibid., 482.
13. Cambridge Conferences Diary for 1899, Lewis G. Janes Papers, SCB.
14. *Complete Works*, 8:483.
15. Ibid., pp. 482-83.
16. *Letters*, pp. 365-66.
17. *Complete Works*, 8:497.
18. Ibid. 6:421, 422.
19. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, November 16, 1899, SCB.
20. *Complete Works*, 6:421.
21. Ibid., 8:480.
22. Diary of Swami Abhedananda (November 22, 1899), see sec. 4, note 6 above.

6

(Pages 143 to 147)

1. Information from personal interview with Mrs. Herbert E. Hyde (niece of Harriet and Isabelle McKindley), Salinas, California, 1969.
2. Nivedita to Mary Hale, Decem-

ber 24, 1899, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.

3. Ibid., November 25, 1899.
4. Ibid.
5. *Complete Works*, 7:516.
6. Sara Bull to Mary Hale, November 24, 1899, SN Col.
7. Vivekananda to Sara Bull, November 30, 1899, SCB.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW MISSION BEGINS

1

(Pages 148 to 171)

1. Josephine MacLeod to Sara Bull, November 26, 1899, SCB.
2. *Life*, p. 678.
3. *Letters*, p. 434.
4. See note 1 above.
5. J. MacLeod to Sister Nivedita, Nov. [?], 1899, fragment, SCB.
6. Ibid., December 15, 1899, SCB.
7. *Complete Works*, 8:484.
8. Alice Hansbrough, "Reminiscences," VSNC Archives.
9. Ibid.
10. J. MacLeod to Nivedita, December 15, 1899, SCB.
11. J. MacLeod to Besse Leggett, December 13, 1899, FHL.
12. *Complete Works*, 6:420-22.
13. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, December 21, 1899, SCB.
14. *Complete Works*, 8: 485.
15. Ibid., p. 483.

2

(Pages 171 to 182)

1. *Rem.* (Josephine MacLeod), p. 247.
2. *Complete Works*, 8:488.
3. See note 1 above.

NOTES TO PAGES 172-198

3

(Pages 182 to 212)

4. J. MacLeod to Mary Hale, February 25, 1900, SN Col.
5. *Letters*, pp. 434-35.
6. "Vivekananda: Some New Findings," comp. the Editors, *V and W* 16, no. 6 (November-December 1953): 176-77.
7. See note 1 above, pp. 247-48.
8. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, December 21, 1899, SCB.
9. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 122
10. *Ibid.*, p. 120
11. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
12. *Complete Works*, 8:486.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 496.
14. See note 4 above.
15. *Complete Works*, 8:510.
16. J. MacLeod to Nivedita, December 15, 1899, SCB.
17. See note 6 above.
18. See note 8 above.
19. J. MacLeod to Nivedita, December 20, 1899, FHL.
20. See note 16 above.
21. *Los Angeles Times*, Theater Section, 24 December 1899.
22. *Maquoketa (Iowa) Record*, 13 August 1902.
23. Alice Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
24. *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopedia*, 10th ed., s. v. "vaudeville."
25. *Loc. cit.*
26. Besse Leggett to Francis Leggett, January 12, 1900, FHL. This passage from Betty Leggett's letter has been given in its entirety at the request of Mrs. Frances Leggett.
27. *Complete Works*, 8:487.
28. Charlotte E. Sevier to J. MacLeod, April 12, 1914, VSNC.
29. *Complete Works*, 8:485.
30. Nivedita, *The Master*, 6th ed. (1948), p. 114.
31. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 290.
1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
2. *Ibid.*
3. J. MacLeod to Besse Leggett, December 14, 1899, SCB.
4. J. MacLeod to Nivedita, December 15, 1899, SCB.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
7. *Ibid.*
8. J. Ransome Bransby to Thomas J. Allan, January 17, 1936, VSNC Archives.
9. J. MacLeod to Nivedita, December 20, 1899, FHL.
10. *Brahmavadin* 5 (March 1900): 365.
11. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
12. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, December 21, 1899, SCB.
13. Rockwell D. Hunt, *California's Stately Hall of Fame*, p. 538.
14. Information from records in the Essex Institute Library, Salem, Massachusetts, made available through the kindness of David R. Proper, Asso. Lib.
15. *Letters*, p. 437.
16. *Life*, p. 678.
17. *Complete Works*, 8: 488.
18. *Ibid.*, 2:24.
19. J. Ransome Bransby, "Swami Vivekananda at the Los Angeles Home," *Unity*, February 1900, pp. 379-80.
20. *Rem.* (Josephine MacLeod), p. 248.
21. Mme Paul Verdier, Notes, copies VSNC.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Complete Works*, 2:36.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
25. p. 34.
26. p. 37.
27. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*

NOTES TO PAGES 199-237

30. *Complete Works*, 2:3.
31. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
32. *Complete Works*, 4:145.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
34. p. 142.
35. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 283.
36. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
37. *Complete Works*, 2:21-23 passim.
38. *Brahmavadin* 6 (September 1901): 720.
39. Besse Leggett to Francis Leggett, January 12, 1900, FHL.
40. See sec. 2, note 6.
41. Besse Leggett to Francis Leggett, February 12, 1900.
42. *Complete Works*, 6:423. In an early copy of this letter the name *Miss Muller* is given. This would seem more appropriate in the context than *Mrs. Miller*, as given in the *Complete Works*.
43. *Ibid.*, 423-24.
44. 7:519.
45. 6:421-22.
46. *Letters*, p. 437.
47. *Complete Works*, 8:485.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 489.
49. *Rem.* (Josephine MacLeod), p. 245.
50. *Complete Works*, 8:489-90.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 485-86.
52. p. 497.
53. pp. 489, 491.
54. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, February 22, 1900, SCB.
55. *Complete Works*, 6:423-24.
5. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
6. J. MacLeod to Nivedita, December 15, 1899, SCB.
7. *Pasadena Daily Star*, 6 February 1900.
8. Besse Leggett to Francis Leggett, January 11, 1900, FHL.
9. *Complete Works*, 3:23.
10. *Ibid.*, 8:489.
11. *V and W*, no. 158, p. 56; see note 4 above.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
13. *Complete Works*, 8:485.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 484.
15. Swami Vivekananda to Nivedita, undated. Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.
16. *Complete Works*, 6:425.
17. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, 2d ed., enl. (1968), p. 26 (place here assigned, p. 89n., does not seem correct).
18. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), pp. 287-88.
19. *V and W*, no. 158, p. 57; see note 4 above.
20. *Ibid.*
21. J. MacLeod to Mary Hale, February 25, 1900, SN Col.
22. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Swami Vivekananda to Alice Hansbrough, [?] 1900, Hansbrough Collection 'SNC.

5

(Pages 235 to 257)

4

(Pages 212 to 235)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Brahmacharini Usha [Pravrajika Anandaprana], "Swamiji in Southern California," *V and W*, no. 158 (November-December 1962): 55.
1. *Pasadena Daily Star*, 2 January 1902. (Actually, *Pasadena* is an American Indian name meaning "Crown of the Valley.")
2. *Complete Works*, 8:484.
3. *Pasadena Daily Evening Star*, 15 January 1900.
4. Cited in "The Grand Resorts," *Fortnight* 18 (January 5, 1955): 44.

NOTES TO PAGES 238-284

5. Besse Leggett to Francis Leggett, January 19, 1900, FHL.
6. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
7. *Complete Works*, 8:53-54.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
9. p. 55.
10. p. 70.
11. pp. 71-72.
12. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
13. *Ibid.*
14. John W. Wood, *Pasadena—Historical and Personal*, p. 479.
15. *Shakespeare Club Year Book*, Pasadena, 1900.
16. *Pasadena Daily Star*, 16 January 1900, et seqq.
17. *Complete Works*, 2:374.
18. *Ibid.*, 8:73.
19. p. 89.
20. p. 87.
21. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary 1963), pp. xxi-xliii. Also *Complete Works*, 9th ed. (1964), 3:511-37.
24. *Complete Works*, 4:124-25.
25. J. W. Wood, op. cit., p. 299.
26. *Complete Works*, 8:486.
27. *Life*, 4th ed., p. 688.
28. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
29. *Complete Works*, 8:77.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 529.
31. p. 531.
32. *P.B.* 22 (May 1917): 94.
33. Swami Vivekananda to Alice Hansbrough, June 3, 1901, Hansbrough Col.
4. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 3, 1899, SCB.
5. *Complete Works*, 2:35.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
7. p. 19.
8. p. 9.
9. pp. 7-8.
10. pp. 401-4.
11. *Talks*, p. 328.
12. *Complete Works*, 2:18.
13. *Ibid.*, 4:121.
14. p. 139.
15. pp. 126-27.
16. See sec. 5, note 23; *P.B.* 69 (July 1964): 287.
17. *Complete Works*, 2:32.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
19. As told to Edna C. Zulch by Alice Hansbrough, March 16, 1941.
20. *Complete Works*, 4:134.
21. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda, 2d ed. (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952), p. 740.
22. *Complete Works*, 6:424-25.
23. *Ibid.*, 8:491-92.

CHAPTER FIVE: NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW GOSPEL

1

(Page 276 to 285)

1. *Complete Works*, 7:498.
2. *Ibid.* 8:523.
3. Nivedita, *The Master*, 6th ed., p. 175.
1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences." All subsequent quotations from Alice Hansbrough in this section are taken from the same source.
2. *Oakland Enquirer*, 13 January 1900.
3. Information is given in a letter from William A. H. Fleischer to Edith S. Hayes, October 31, 1967, VSNC.
4. *Rem.* (Christina Albers), p. 389; *P.B.* 43 (August 1938): 399.

6

(Pages 257 to 275)

NOTES TO PAGES 288-315

(Pages 285 to 300)

1. *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 February 1900. (If the church member was being correctly quoted by the *Examiner*, his innocence of grammar should not be taken as typical of the parishioners of the First Unitarian Church, who were, on the whole, literate.)
2. *Neely's History of the Parliament of Religions*, ed. Walter R. Houghton, 3d ed. (1893), p. 465.
3. *Advance*, June 24, 1915, p. 1251; see also *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Mills, Benjamin Fay."
4. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
5. *Brahmavadin* 5 (January 1900): 165-66.
6. *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 February 1900.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Life*, 4th ed., p. 679.
9. Sarah Fox, "Memoirs," VSNC Archives.
10. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
11. Burke, *New Discoveries*, 2d ed., pp. 242-43.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
13. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences." In Minneapolis in 1893 Swamiji gave yet another reply to the crocodile question: "Yes, madam," he said, "they threw me in, but like your fabled Jonah, I got out again." (*Life*, 4th ed., p. 323)
14. *Complete Works*, 8:234.
2. *Swami Vivekananda and His Guru* etc. (for full title see text or Bibliography), p. 25.
3. *Letters*, 4th ed., p. 399.
4. *Lewis G. Janes* (memorial volume), (Boston: James H. West Company, 1902), p. 182.
5. *Outlook* 58, nos. 8 & 12 (February 19, March 19, 1898): 466, 740; Dr. Janes's letters as quoted here are taken from copies of his manuscripts (SCB). As printed in the *Outlook* of February 19, 1898, his first letter was very much cut and vitiated, to which censorship Dr. Janes objected in a second letter. Parts of this were printed in the *Outlook* of March 19, with inimical and counteracting editorial comment. The *Outlook* stood firmly behind the Christian clergy.
6. *Complete Works* 6:46-48 passim.
7. *Ibid.*, 8:299.
8. pp. 494-95.

4

(Pages 310 to 313)

1. Thomas J. Allan, paper read before the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, January 2, 1935, Allan Papers, VSNC Archives, San Francisco.
2. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 383.
3. George A. Applegarth, interview, March 21, 1962, VSNC Archives.

5

(Pages 313 to 322)

1. *Boston Congregationalist* as quoted in *Brooklyn Standard Union*, 13 February 1898; see also *Literary Digest*, March 5, 1898.
1. Swami Vivekananda to J. MacLeod, March 2, 1900, FHL.
2. *Life*, 4th ed., pp. 679-80; *ibid.*, 1st ed., 3:385.

3

(Pages 300 to 310)

NOTES TO PAGES 316-367

3. *Complete Works*, 8: 496.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 498.
5. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
6. *Rem.* (Viraja Devi), p. 394.
7. *Complete Works*, 8:498.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 496-97.
9. p. 497.
10. *Rem.* (M. N. Ganguli), p. 356.
11. *Complete Works*, 8:497.

8

(Pages 338 to 344)

1. Ida Ansell to Swami Ashokananda, November 22, 1946, Ansell Papers, VSNC Archives.
2. Excerpts from letters of Ida Ansell to Swami Ashokananda, 1945-48, from original letters, Ansell Papers.

6

(Pages 322 to 327)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences." All subsequent quotations from Mrs. Alice Hansbrough in this section are taken from the same source.
2. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 380.

7

(Pages 327 to 337)

1. *Complete Works*, 8:494.
2. *Ibid.*, 6:81.
3. "Swami Vivekananda in Oakland," *P.B.* 41 (May 1936): 385.
4. *Complete Works*, 8:236.
5. *Ibid.*, 235.
6. *Oakland Enquirer*, 24, 25 March 1900.
7. *Complete Works*, 7:520.
8. *Ibid.*, 8:509.
9. p. 241.
10. pp. 70-71.
11. Thomas J. Allan, notes, Allan Papers.
12. *Complete Works*, 4:196.
13. *Life*, 4th ed., pp. 693-94.
14. See sec. 4 above, note 1.
15. *Life*, p. 689.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 692.
17. See note 11 above.
18. *P. B.* 31 (June 1926): 243; see also *P. B.* 37 (May 1932): 244.

9

(Pages 345 to 355)

1. Ida Ansell to Swami Ashokananda, October 6, 1945, Ansell Papers.
2. Eloise Roorbach, recorded conversations, San Francisco and Camp Taylor, May 4, 1950, VSNC Archives.
3. *Complete Works*, 4:120, 121.
4. *Rem.* (Christina Albers), p. 389.
5. See sec. 5 above, note 1.
6. *Pasadena Daily Evening Star*, 4 January 1900.
7. *Complete Works*, 8:509.
8. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ernest C. Brown, "Vedanta in America: My Reminiscences," *Vedanta for East and West* 8 (July-August 1959): 186-87.
11. *Complete Works*, 8:96.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-3 passim.

11

(Pages 365 to 370)

1. See sec. 9 above, note 10, p. 187.
2. Thomas J. Allan, notes, Allan Papers.
3. *Ibid.*; see also *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 385.
4. See note 2 above.
5. See note 2 above.

NOTES TO PAGES 368-399

6. Excerpts from first transcript of "Mohammed," VSNC.
7. *Complete Works*, 1:482.
8. See note 6 above.
9. See note 7 above.
10. Swami Vivekananda, "Mohammed," *V and W*, 124:9.
11. *Complete Works*, 1:483.
3. See sec. 13, note 13 above.
4. *Complete Works*, 5:294.
5. *Ibid.*, 2:22,
6. The four pages of "Yoga Notes" here quoted are from the Emma Thursby Collection, New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.

12

(Pages 370 to 372)

1. First transcript of "Mohammed."
2. Loc. cit.
3. *Complete Works*, 1:438.
4. *Ibid.*, 441-43 passim.

13

(Pages 373 to 380)

1. Frank Rhodhamel, "Vedanta in California: Memories," *P.B.* 21 (February-March 1916): 37.
2. Ida Ansell to Thomas Allan, June 6, 1932, Allan Papers.
3. Edith Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers.
4. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
5. *Life*, 4th ed., pp. 694-95.
6. See note 1 above.
7. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
8. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 372.
9. See note 1 above.
10. *Complete Works*, 2:466.
11. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Life*, p. 696.
14. *P. B.* 32 (March 1927): 125.

14

(Pages 380 to 392)

1. See sec. 13, note 4 above.
2. See sec. 13, note 1 above.

15

(Pages 392 to 399)

1. *Complete Works*, 8:36; booklet, *Six Lessons in Raja Yoga*, p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 37; booklet, p. 5. Shankaracharya lists the four indispensable qualifications for the attainment of liberation as follows: "The first is discrimination between what is eternal and what is not eternal. The second constituent is the lack of attachment for such of the objects of enjoyment as may be gained either here or hereafter. The six noble qualities, such as calmness of mind and the like [tranquility, control of the senses, fortitude, renunciation, faith, concentration], when taken together, form the third constituent. According to the Sastras, the fourth and final constituent is the desire for liberation" (*The Quintessence of Vedanta*, 14, 15, trans. Swami Tattwananda).
3. *Complete Works*, 7:435.
4. *Ibid.* p. 198.
5. 8:38-39; booklet, pp. 8-9.
6. p. 44; booklet, pp. 17-18.
7. p. 43; booklet, pp. 16-17.
8. pp. 46, 47; booklet, pp. 21, 22, 23.
9. p. 41; booklet, p. 14.
10. pp. 47-48; booklet, pp. 24-25.
11. pp. 50, 51; booklet, pp. 28-29, 30.
12. pp. 51, 52; booklet, p. 31.

NOTES TO PAGES 401-419

16

(Pages 399 to 407)

1. *Life*, p. 696.
2. *Complete Works*, 1:170.
3. *Ibid.*, 6:377, 378.
4. Sir John G. Woodroffe [Arthur Avalon], *The Serpent Power*, p. 225 n. See also *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika*, 2, 15.
5. *Talks*, p. 305.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
7. *Complete Works*, 6:136.
8. *Ibid.*, 8:48.
9. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
10. *Letters*, pp. 425-26.
11. See note 5 above, p. 234.
12. *Ibid.* See note 5 above, pp. 109-10.
13. *Rem.* (Josephine MacLeod), p. 235.
14. See note 5 above, p. 237.
15. *Complete Works*, 1:139.
16. *Ibid.*, 8:39; booklet, *Six Lessons*, p. 8.
17. *Sutta Nipata*, Vagga 1, Sutta 8, "Mettasutta" (Goodwill).
18. *Complete Works*, 1:146.
19. *Life*, 4th ed., pp. 695-96.
20. See sec. 13, note 1 above.
21. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
22. Edith B. Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers; see also *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 384.

17

(Pages 407 to 414)

1. *Life*, 4th ed., pp. 694-95.
2. *Rem.* (Viraja Devi), p. 394.
3. Allan Papers.
4. As told by Mrs. Allan to Miriam Kennedy (Br. Mukti), San Francisco, 1949.
5. See note 2 above, pp. 394-95.
6. From an interview of Mr. and Mrs. Allan by John Yale (Swami Vidyatmananda), San Francisco, September, 1952, Allan Papers.

7. See note 3 above.

8. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."

9. See note 6 above.

10. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 384; see also note 6 above.

13. *Ibid.*; see also *ibid.* (Viraja Devi), p. 397.

14. See note 3 above.

15. *Rem.* (Viraja Devi), p. 397; see also note 3 above.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. See note 3 above.

19. See note 15 above.

20. As told by Mrs. Allan to Edna C. Zulch, San Francisco, 1938.

21. See note 6 above; see also *Rem.* (Viraja Devi), p. 398.

18

(Pages 414 to 420)

1. *Talks*, pp. 368-69; see also *Complete Works*, 5:376.
2. *Rem.* (Sister Christine), p. 210.
3. *Ibid.* (Ida Ansell), p. 385.
4. See note 1, p. 33.
5. Sarah E. Waldo, "Introductory Narrative" to *Inspired Talks* by Swami Vivekananda, p. 14.
6. *Brahmavadin* 1 (March 28, 1896): 182; *Ibid.*, 1 (April 25, 1896): 206-7.
7. Letters of Swami Kripananda to Mrs. Bull, 1896, SCB.
8. *Rem.* (J. MacLeod), pp. 235-36.
9. *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, new ed. (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1934), p. 74, no. 180.
10. *Complete Works*, 6:141.
11. *Ibid.*, 8:114.
12. See note 1, p. 46.

NOTES TO PAGES 420-451

19

(Pages 420 to 425)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences." All subsequent quotations from Alice Hansbrough in this section are taken from the same source.
2. Allan Papers.
3. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 378.
4. *Complete Works*, 7:518.

20

(Pages 425 to 439)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences." All subsequent quotations from Mrs. Hansbrough in this section are taken from the same source.
2. Thomas J. Allan, Paper delivered before the Vedanta Society, January 13, 1935, Allan Papers.
3. Ida Ansell to Swami Ashokananda, February 27, 1947, Ansell Papers.
4. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 386.
5. *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 February 1900.
6. *Life*, p. 692.
7. *Complete Works*, 8:520.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 510-11.
9. Cara M. French, "Memoirs," VSNC.
10. *Complete Works*, 8:521.
11. See note 2 above.
12. See note 2 above.
13. *Complete Works*, 6:432.
14. *Ibid.*, 8:506.
15. 6:430.
16. 8:504-5. The postscript of this letter is from a typed copy of the original, SN Col.
17. *Complete Works*, 6:431-32.

21

(Pages 439 to 451)

1. *Life*, p. 690.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Complete Works*, 1:520 ("Breathing and Meditation").
4. Sarah Fox, "Memoirs."
5. As related by Ernest C. Brown to Swami Ashokananda in San Francisco, c. 1940.
6. *Letters*, pp. 204, 206. The passages as given here are taken from an early typescript (SN Col.) and differ slightly from the published version.
7. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Cara M. French, "Memoirs."
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Complete Works*, 4:219-222 passim.
13. First transcript of "Concentration," March 16, 1900, VSNC.
14. *Loc. cit.*
15. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
16. *Life*, p. 693.
17. From an interview of Mr. and Mrs. Allan by John Yale (Swami Vidyatmananda), San Francisco, September, 1952, Allan Papers, VSNC.
18. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 372.
19. *Life*, p. 689.
20. Recorded conversation of Eloise Roorbach, San Francisco, May 4, 1950, VSNC Archives.
21. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
22. *Ibid.*
23. As told by Mrs. Allan to Miriam Kennedy (Br. Mukti), San Francisco, c. 1949.
24. *Rem.* (Sister Christine), p. 179.
25. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."

22

(Pages 451 to 460)

1. Edith Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers.

NOTES TO PAGES 452-479

2. *Life*, p. 691.
3. *Complete Works*, 8:248-49.
4. First transcript of "Soul and God," March 23, 1900, VSNC.
5. *Complete Works*, 2:464-65.
6. *Ibid.*, 6:94-95.
7. 2:470-71.
8. *Life*, p. 691.
9. *Complete Works*, 2:471-74 passim.
10. This quotation from "The Soul and God" is taken from the first transcript; see also *Complete Works*, 1:489.
11. *Life*, p. 689.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 692.
13. *Complete Works*, 8:491.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 496.
15. See note 1 above.
16. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 375.
20. *Life*, p. 693.
21. Ida Ansell, original memoirs, 1947, VSNC.
22. Thomas Allan, Paper of 1935 and other notes, Allan Papers.
23. See note 1 above.
- and Evolution," a paper read before the Parliament of Religions; see sec. 2, note 2 above, pp. 831-32.
12. Francis G. Peabody, "Christianity and the Social Question"; see sec. 2, note 2 above, pp. 528-29.
13. *Oakland Enquirer*, 25 March 1900.
14. Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 1270.
15. Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*, pp. 28, 29.
16. Quoted in *The United States Since 1865*, Foster Rhea Dulles, p. 64.
17. Quoted in *The Protestant Establishment*, E. Digby Baltzell, p. 101.
18. *Complete Works*, 4:246.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 243-44.
20. pp. 238-39.
21. pp. 241-42.
22. Mrs. George W. Hale to Swami Vivekananda, February 26, 1895, SN Col.
23. *Complete Works*, 8:524.
24. *Talks*, p. 210.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
26. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
27. *Complete Works*, 4:244-47 passim.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
29. First transcript of "Meditation," April 3, 1900; see also *Complete Works*, 4:231.
30. *Complete Works*, 8:135.

23 .

(Pages 460 to 475)

1. *Complete Works*, 1:504.
2. *Ibid.*
3. p. 511.
4. 4:228-29.
5. pp. 226-27.
6. pp. 231-32.
7. 1:516.
8. pp. 514-20 passim.
9. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 3, 5.
10. William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*, pp. 103-4.
11. Henry Drummond, "Christianity

24

(Pages 475 to 480)

1. *Complete Works*, 8:120-21. (For the qualifications of discipleship see sec. 15, note 2 above.)
2. *Ibid.*, 5:227.
3. 8:126, 133-34.
4. pp. 131-32.
5. pp. 140-41.
6. p. 141.

NOTES TO PAGES 479-513

7. p. 126.
8. pp. 139, 141.
9. p. 140.

25

(Pages 480 to 492)

1. *Complete Works*, 8:512.
2. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
3. *Complete Works*, 8:512.
4. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, April 7, 1900, SN Col.; for published portions see *Complete Works*, 8:513.
5. Beni Shanker Sharma, *Swami Vivekananda—A Forgotten Chapter of His Life*, pp. 171-72.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-74.
7. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, May 18, 1900, SCB.
8. See note 5 above, p. 185.
9. *Complete Works*, 8:292.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 513.
11. 6:52.
12. 8:133.
13. 6:51-52, 55-56.
14. pp. 49-50.
15. pp. 68-69.
16. pp. 73, 77, 78.
17. 8:238.
18. *Rem.* (Viraja Devi), p. 397.
19. *Complete Works*, 8:135.
20. Ida Ansell, original memoirs.
21. *Complete Works*, 8:133.
22. Edith Allan, as related to Edna C. Zulch, San Francisco, 1938.
23. *Complete Works*, 8:515-16.
24. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, April 12, 1900, SN Col.; for published portions see *Complete Works*, 8:517.

26

(Pages 492 to 500)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."

2. Swami Vivekananda to Mrs. Bull, April 12, 1900, SN Col.; for published portions of this letter see *Complete Works*, 8:517.
3. *Complete Works*, 8:531.
4. See note 2 above.
5. VSNC Archives.
6. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
7. Early Minutes of the Vedanta Society, VSNC Archives.
8. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER SIX: A WORLD MISSION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

1

(Pages 501 to 516)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Complete Works*, 1:476.
4. Interview with Mrs. Thomas J. Allan by John Yale (Swami Vidyatmananda), San Francisco, September 1952, Allan Papers; see also *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 383.
5. Eloise Roorbach, recorded conversations, San Francisco and Camp Taylor, May 4, 1950.
6. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, April 12, 1900, SN Col.
7. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
8. See note 5 above.
9. *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 1897.
10. *Alameda Argus*, 17 March 1900.
11. *Rem.* (Viraja Devi), p. 397. The bracketed phrase in this quotation is from Mrs. Allan's unpublished notes (Allan Papers).
12. First transcript of "Meditation," April 3, 1900, VSNC.
13. *Complete Works*, 8:491.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
15. As related by Mrs. Allan to a member of the Vedanta Society of

NOTES TO PAGES 513-542

- Northern California, San Francisco.
16. See note 6 above.
 17. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
 18. *Complete Works*, 8:434.
 19. *Ibid.*, 4:249.

2

(Pages 516 to 530)

1. See sec. 1, note 6 above.
2. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
3. Frank Rhodhamel, "Vedanta in California," *Prabuddha Bharata* 21 (February-March 1916): 38-39.
4. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, p. 155.
5. See note 3 above, p. 38.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
7. Br. Gurudasa [later Swami Atulananda], *P. B.* 23 (April 1918): 85.
8. See sec. 1, note 5 above.
9. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
10. A Western Disciple [Br. Gurudasa, later Swami Atulananda], *With the Swamis*, p. 8.
11. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
12. Thomas J. Allan, Allan Papers.
13. See note 3 above, p. 38.
14. As related by Edith Allan to Edna C. Zulch, San Francisco, 1938.
15. Edith Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers; see also *Rem.*, p. 396.
16. Edith Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers.
17. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
18. "Hill Resorts of India," *India News* (Washington, D. C.), 26 July 1968.
19. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
20. See note 10 above, p. 119.
21. See note 10 above pp. 119-20.
22. Thomas J. Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers.
23. See note 14 above.
24. *Complete Works*, 8:495.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 495-96.

26. p. 508.
27. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, April 12, 1900, SN Col.; cf. *Complete Works*, 8:517.
28. Thomas J. Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers.
29. Nivedita to Mary Hale, October 27, 1908, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
30. *Complete Works*, 6:432-34.
31. *Ibid.*, 8:519.

3

(Pages 530 to 546)

1. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences." (Subsequent quotations from Alice Hansbrough in this section are taken from the same source.)
2. *Complete Works*, 8:520.
3. Ida Ansell, original memoirs, 1947, VSNAC Archives.
4. *Complete Works*, 8:520.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 521.
6. 7:522.
7. A. Bray Dickinson, *Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods*, pp. 61-62.
8. Recorded conversation with Ida Ansell, Camp Taylor, September 1948, VSNAC Archives. Mr. Allan's memory of the dining room differs from Ida Ansell's. In his unpublished notes, Mr. Allan wrote of the "improvised, canvas-walled dining room and kitchen" that existed during Swamiji's stay at Camp Taylor. Miss Ansell's memory may have been the clearer on this point.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Eloise Roorbach, recorded conversations, Camp Taylor, May 4, 1950.
11. *Complete Works*, 8:521.
12. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 379.

NOTES TO PAGES 542-575

13. See note 3 above.
14. Br. Gurudasa [later Swami Atulananda], *P.B.* 23 (April 1918): 84.
15. See note 3 above.
16. Much of my information in regard to the early days of Camp Taylor comes from the manuscript of Bertha Stedman Rothwell's "Pioneering in Marin County," San Francisco Public Library.
17. See note 10 above.
18. Ibid.
19. See note 8 above.
20. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 381.
21. Unpublished notes, Allan Papers.
22. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), pp. 378-79.
23. See note 10 above.
- Sankari Prasad Basu's *Lokamata Nivedita*, pp. 553-55.
2. Swami Vivekananda to Sara Bull, May 18, 1900, SCB.
3. Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta.
4. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
5. Ibid.
6. *The Bay of San Francisco, a History*, pp. 89-90.
7. Ibid., p. 90.
8. Ibid.
9. Cara M. French, "Memoirs."
10. Swami Abhedananda, *Vivekananda and His Work*, 3rd ed. (1950), pp. 51-53.
11. Early Minutes, Vedanta Society of San Francisco, May 3, 1900, VSNC Archives.
12. Ibid., May 24, 1900.
13. Allan Papers.
14. Nivedita, *The Master*, 6th ed. (1948), p. 202.

4

(Pages 547 to 555)

1. Ida Ansell, original memoirs; see also *Rem.*, pp. 379-80.
2. Eloise Roorbach, recorded conversations, San Francisco and Camp Taylor, May 4, 1950.
3. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
4. *Complete Works*, 2:472.
5. Ibid., p. 471.
6. 7: 200.
7. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 380.
8. Ibid.
9. See note 2 above.
10. See note 2 above.
11. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 380.
12. See note 2 above.
13. *Life*, p. 681.
14. See note 2 above.
15. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
16. *Rem.* (Ida Ansell), p. 381.
17. Ibid., pp. 381-82.

5

(Pages 555 to 567)

Mrs. Bull's letter can be found in

6

(Pages 567 to 590)

1. *Complete Works*, 4:102.
2. Ibid., 5:247.
3. 4:428.
4. 4:104.
5. 5:246.
6. 4:325.
7. 4:104.
8. 3:259-60.
9. 4:105.
10. 7:19.
11. 7:272-73.
12. 4:105-6.
13. 2:189.
14. 7:57; 2:292; 3:261; 3:244-45.
15. *Letters*, p.58.
16. *Complete Works*, 4:95.
17. Ibid., 7:137.
18. 4:106-7.
19. 3:261.

NOTES TO PAGES 575-609

20. 4:359.
21. 7:22.
22. 3:256.
23. 3:263.
24. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 263-64.
25. *Complete Works*, 5:450, 446.
26. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 273.
27. *Complete Works*, 5:454.
28. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), pp. 292-93.
29. *Complete Works*, 5:453-54.
30. *Ibid.*, 4:107.
31. 3:267.
32. Nivedita, *The Master*, pp. 241-42.
33. *Complete Works*, 3:323-24.
34. *Ibid.*, 3:244-45.
35. 7:197-98.
36. 4:107.
37. 5:247-49.
38. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 328.
39. *Complete Works*, 7:88.
40. *Ibid.*, 2:3-4.
41. 1:510.
42. 6:431.
43. *Bhagavad Gita* 2.3; *Complete Works*, 4:108.
44. *Complete Works*, 4:108-9.
45. *Ibid.*, 5:452-53.
46. 1:38-39.
47. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 292.
48. *Complete Works*, 4:109-10.
49. *Ibid.*, 4:110.
50. 7:199-200.
51. 8:8-9.
52. 3:193-94.
53. 3:359.
54. 6:458.
55. 7:185.
56. 7:197.
57. 4:349.
58. 6:459.
59. 8:72.

7

(Pages 590 to 600)

1. *Life*, 4th ed. (1949), pp. 372-73.
2. *Complete Works*, 1:441-42.

3. Frank Rhodehamel, "Shanti Ashrama Days," *P.B.* 23 (May 1918): 107.
4. First transcript of "Gita—I," VSNC.
5. *Complete Works*, 1:454.
6. *Ibid.*, 1:457.
7. 1:461-62.
8. See note 3 above.
9. See note 4 above; see also *Complete Works*, 1:461.
10. *Complete Works*, 1:462-66 passim.
11. *Ibid.*, 1:469.
12. 1:473-74.
13. 1:474.
14. 1:476.
15. 1:475.
16. 1:476.
17. 1:477-80.
18. See note 3 above.

8

(Pages 600 to 607)

1. Early Minutes, Vedanta Society of San Francisco.
2. Frank Rhodehamel, "Shanti Ashrama Days," *P.B.* 23 (May 1918): 107.
3. Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."
4. Edith Allan, unpublished notes, Allan Papers.
5. *Pacific Vedantin*, August 1902; *Brahmavadin* 7 (October 1902): 690-91.
6. *P.B.* 5 (June 1900): 37; *Life*, 1st ed., 3:390.
7. *Life*, 1st ed., 3:391.
8. Alfred T. Clifton (Swami Chidrupananda), "One Hundred Days in India."

9

(Pages 607 to 640)

1. *Letters*, 4th ed. (1948), p. 222.

NOTES TO PAGES 610-641

2. *Complete Works*, 3:505.
3. *Ibid.*, 5:314.
4. *Letters*, p. 218.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
6. *New York Herald*, 19 January 1896.
7. *Letters*, p. 320.
8. *Complete Works*, 8:90.
9. *Rem.* (Sister Christine), p. 218.
10. *Letters*, p. 206.
11. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, September 3, 1899, SCB; see chap. 3, sec. 2 of this book.
12. *Rem.* (Josephine MacLeod), p. 247.
13. *Complete Works*, 3:244.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 346-47.
15. *Talks*, p. 217.
16. *Complete Works*, 3:427.
17. See note 15 above, p. 280.
18. Sister Nivedita to J. MacLeod, March 12, 1899. Parts of this letter are published in *P.B.* 40 (February 1935): 35, and less fully in *Rem.* (Nivedita), pp. 273-74. The heretofore unpublished portions are taken from a copy of the original letter, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur; Nivedita's interview with Swamiji is published under the title "On the Bounds of Hinduism," *P.B.* April 1899, and *Complete Works*, 5:233.
19. *Rem.* (Nivedita), p. 276.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
21. See note 15 above, pp. 172-73, 177.
22. *Complete Works*, 2:199, 358, 304.
23. Cf. *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, p. 612.
24. *Complete Works*, 1:501.
25. 1:7.
26. 6:64-65.
27. 4:434-35.
28. 4:124.
29. 4:126-27.
30. 1:483 (taken also from first transcript, VSNC).
31. 4:478; see e.g., 2:403; 1:461-62; 8:131-32.
32. 8:134, 135.
33. 2:470.
34. 6:54-55.
35. 8:96.
36. 5:186-87.
37. 5:189.
38. 5:196.
39. *Letters*, p. 270.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
41. *Rem.* (Sister Christine), pp. 159-60.
42. *Letters*, p. 292.
43. Sara C. Bull to Swami Kripa-nanda, July ? 1896, SCB.
44. *Complete Works*, 6:378.
45. Greenacre Bulletin, "Season 1896-97, New York," SCB.
46. *Letters*, pp. 304-5.
47. *Complete Works*, 8:388.
48. *Ibid.*, 8:356-57.
49. Swami Abhedananda, San Francisco Vedanta Society, March 18, 1915, VSNC Archives.
50. *Complete Works*, 8:77.
51. *Ibid.*, 8:516.
52. 8:126-27, 136.
53. 8:523. The address and date of this letter as given in the *Complete Works* is "1921 [921] W 21 Street, Los Angeles, 17th June, 1900." It is possible that both this address and date are incorrect, and it is certain that either one or the other is incorrect, for Swamiji was in New York on June 17, 1900.
54. 8:141.

10

(Pages 640 to 663)

1. *Life*, p. 685. (This information was first published in "A Brief Sketch of Swami Vivekananda's Stay in America" by Sarah E. Waldo, *P.B.* 9 (January 1906): 8.
2. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, p. 155.

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3. *Complete Works*, 8:494.
4. Swami Shankarananda, *Swami Abhedananda Jivankatha*, p. 263.
5. Sister Shivani (Mary Le Page), *Swami Abhedananda in America*, 2d ed. (1958), p. 112; see also *P.B.* 7 (January 1902): 17.
6. See note 4 above, p. 231.
7. *Complete Works*, 8:518.
8. *Life*, 686-87.
9. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), pp. 290-92.
10. *Complete Works*, 8:250-51.
11. Nivedita, *The Master*, app. C, p. xv.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
13. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 291.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
15. *Complete Works*, 8:252-53.
16. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 292-93.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
18. *Spiritual Talks* (Swami Turiyananda), pp. 200-1.
19. Lillian Montgomery to Swami Pavitrana, June 22, 1954, New York Vedanta Society.
20. *Complete Works*, 8:516.
21. *Rem.* (S. E. Waldo), p. 132.
22. Sister Devamata, Preface to *Inspired Talks* by Swami Vivekananda, p. v.
23. *Complete Works*, 6:425.
24. *Ibid.*, 8:512.
25. Nivedita's letter is quoted from a copy of the original, RKM, Belur. It is published in part in Br. Usha's (Pravrajika Anandaprana) "Glimpses of Sister Nivedita," *V and W* 156 (July-August 1962), pp. 41-42.
26. *Letters*, p. 445.
27. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, June 26, 1900, RKM, Belur.
28. Unidentified "New York newspaper, June 27 (?) 1900, Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta.

11

(Pages 663 to 671)

1. A Western Disciple [Br. Gurudasa, later Swami Atulananda], *With the Swamis*, p. 85.
2. Florence Adams, telegram, SCB, VSNC.
3. U.S., California, Santa Clara Co., San Jose, Book 232 of Deeds, p. 219.
4. Swami Vivekananda to Alice Hansbrough, New York, no date, Hansbrough Collection, VSNC Archives.
5. *Life*, p. 686; see also Swami Ritajananda, *Swami Turiyananda*, pp. 57-58.
6. Swami Vivekananda to Alice Hansbrough, New York, July 3, 1900, Hansbrough Col.
7. See note 1 above, pp. 114-15.
8. Swami Vivekananda to Alice Hansbrough, Benares, February 14, 1902, Hansbrough Col.
9. Early Minutes, Vedanta Society of San Francisco.
10. "Letters of Swami Premananda," *V and W* 187:38.

12

(Pages 671 to 677)

1. Boshi Sen, "Sister Christine," *P.B.* 35 (September 1930): 419.
2. *Life*, p. 688.
3. Mary C. Funke, "The Master," in *Inspired Talks* (1939), p. 35.
4. *Life*, p. 676.
5. *Letters*, pp. 448-49.
6. See note 3 above, p. 27.
7. *Complete Works*, 8: 527.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Sister Devamata, "Memories of India and Indians," *P.B.* 37 (June 1932): 301.

NOTES TO PAGES 675-695

10. *Rem.*, p. 149.
11. *Complete Works*, 8: 528.
12. *Ibid.*, 7: 204.
13. *Rem.*, p. 217.
14. *Complete Works*, 8: 527.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 528. The Mr. Whitmarsh of Swamiji's letter was Theodore Whitmarsh, a nephew of Francis Leggett.
19. 8: 533.
20. *P.B.*, March 1967, pp. 131-32; Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 133.
21. See note 2 above, *P.B.*, March 1967, pp. 131-32.
22. *Complete Works*, 7: 378.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
24. Sir Hiram Maxim, Foreword to *Li Hung Chang's Scrap Book*.
25. Alice Hansbrough, "Reminiscences."

CHAPTER SEVEN: HOMEWARD BOUND

1

(Pages 678 to 700)

1. *Complete Works*, 5: 471-72.
2. Swami Vidyatmananda, "Swami Vivekananda in France," *P.B.* 72 (March 1967); "Swami Vivekananda in Brittany," *P.B.* 73 (March 1968); "Swami Vivekananda at the Paris Congress," *P.B.* 74 (March, April 1969).
3. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 29.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Rem.* (Josephine Macleod), p. 249.
6. *Complete Works*, 8: 464.
7. Lewis G. Janes to Helen Janes, July 6, 1900, Janes Papers, Mrs. Charles Lyttle, Chicago.
8. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, August 4, 1900, *P.B.*, March 1967, p. 130. The respected widow of Mr. Bull was naturally addressed by Swamiji as "Sacred Cow."
9. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 127.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
11. *Complete Works*, 5: 472.
12. See note 7 above, July 8, 1900.
13. *Complete Works*, 7: 380.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 130.
16. *Complete Works*, 8: 472.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
18. 7: 373.
26. Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower*, p. 269.
27. Romain Rolland, *Prophets of the New India*, p. 438.
28. Swami Vidyatmananda, *P.B.* March 1967, p. 134; for the Duke of Richelieu see Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, p. 160.
29. *Complete Works*, 7: 382.
30. *Ibid.*, 8: 534.
31. 7: 379.
32. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, pp. 381-83.
33. Lewis G. Janes to Helen Janes, July 6, 1900, Janes Papers.
34. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1900.
35. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 128.
36. *Complete Works*, 7: 380.
37. *Udbodhan*, Jyais'ha issue, 1334-1335 (Bengali year corresponding to 1928).
38. *Complete Works*, 8: 517.
39. *Ibid.*, 8: 534-35.
40. *P. B.* (March 1927): 125, Notes and Comments: "Reminiscences."
41. Swami Vidyatmananda, "Swami Vivekananda and Père Hyacinthe Loyson," *P. B.* 70 (March 1971): 120.
42. Emma Thursby to Ina Thursby, August, 1900, Emma Thursby Collection, New-York Historical Society, New York.
43. *Complete Works*, 7: 376-78 passim.

NOTES TO PAGES 695-715

44. See note 42 above.
45. Unpublished passage is from original letter, FHL.
46. *Complete Works*, 6: 439.
47. Lewis G. Janes to Helen Janes, July 8, 1900, Janes Papers.
48. *Complete Works*, 6: 438-40 passim.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 438.
50. Diary of Lewis G. Janes, August 28-September 3, 1900, Janes Papers.
51. *Complete Works*, 6: 439.
52. William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), p. 39.
53. Quoted in "Swami Vivekananda in France," Swami Vidyatmananda, *P.B.* 72 (March 1967): 133.
54. Emma Thursby to Ina Thursby, August, 1900, Emma Thursby Collection.
55. *Complete Works*, 6: 440.
56. Emma Thursby Collection.
57. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita*; see chap. 3, sec. 3, note 11.
58. Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
13. *Complete Works*, 4: 422-23; translation of Bengali letter, *Udbodhan*, vol. 2, no. 20.
14. Romain Rolland, *Prophets of the New India*, pp. 436-37.
15. *Complete Works*, 4: 425.
16. *Ibid.*, 429.
17. 3: 260.
18. *Lewis G. Janes* (memorial volume), p. 182.
19. Alberta Sturges to Sara Bull, December 28, 1900, and February 2, 1901, SCB.
20. Swami Vidyatmananda, *P.B.* 72 (March 1967): 134.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
22. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, August 4, 1900, see note 20, p. 130.
23. Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita*, p. 113.
24. Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, see chap. 3, sec. 3, note 11. Portions of this letter can also be found in Raymond's *The Dedicated*, pp. 224, 227.
25. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, July [?] 1900, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
26. Pravrajika Atmaprana, op. cit., p. 113.
27. Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita*; see chap. 3, sec., 3, note 11.
28. *Complete Works*, 6: 435-36.
29. Pravrajika Atmaprana, op. cit., p. 115.

2

(Pages 700 to 714)

1. *Rem.* (J. MacLeod), p. 249.
2. *Complete Works*, 8: 533-34.
3. Jules Bois, "The New Religions of America V—Hindu Cults," *Forum* 77 (March 1927): 415, 414.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 414-15.
5. *Complete Works*, 8: 534.
6. See note 3 above, pp. 417-18.
7. *Complete Works*, 7: 375, 376.
8. *Ibid.*, 5: 155.
9. p. 162.
10. J. Bois, "The Ecstasy," trans. Gurudas Sarcar, *P.B.* 23 (March 1918): 59.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
12. See note 3 above, p. 422.

3

(Pages 714 to 726)

1. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, 1897 [no other date], SCB.
2. Lewis G. Janes to Helen Janes, August 22, 1900, Janes Papers.
3. Sara Bull to Emma Thursby, end of July, 1900, Thursby Col.
4. Emma Thursby to Ina Thursby, August 1900, Thursby Col.

NOTES TO PAGES 716-742

5. See note 2 above.
6. See note 4 above, September 20, 1900.
7. Sara Bull to Emma Thursby, September 17, 1900, Thursby Col.
8. Lewis G. Janes to Helen Janes, July 6, 1900, Janes Papers.
9. See note 4 above.
10. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, August 21, 1900, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
11. *Complete Works*, 8: 532.
12. *Ibid.*, 490.
13. 6:435.
14. 8: 533.
15. *Complete Works*, Bengali edition, 8:151.
16. *Complete Works*, 6: 442-43.
17. *History RKMM*, p. 144.
18. *Complete Works*, 6: 435-36.
19. *Ibid.*, 176.
20. Nivedita to Sara Bull, December 20, 1906, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
21. Nivedita, *The Master*, pp. 221-22.
22. Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated*, p. 228.
23. *The Hindu* (Madras), 4 February 1902.
24. *Complete Works*, 5: 174-75.
25. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, July 16, 1902, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
26. See note 20 above.

4

(Pages 726 to 737)

1. Sara Bull to Emma Thursby, September 13, 1900, Thursby Col.
2. *P. B.* 54 (July 1949): 259.
3. Nivedita to Sara Bull, October 3, 1900, SCB.
4. *Complete Works*, 8: 536.
5. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 226.
6. Swami Vivekananda to Sister

Christine, October 14, 1900. This quotation is taken from a copy of Swamiji's letter in the original French, which was made available by Mrs. Boshi Sen. The translation is mine. See also *Complete Works*, 8: 537.

7. Nivedita to J. MacLeod, April 29, 1903, Nivedita Papers, RKM, Belur.
8. Nivedita, *The Master*, pp. 222-23.
9. Swami Saradananda to Sara Bull, November 15, 1900, SCB.
10. Quoted in Sankari Prasad Basu's *Lokamata Nivedita*, inserts following p. 276.
11. "Notes of Conversation with Swami Turiyananda," *P. B.* 37 (April 1932): 158.
12. *Complete Works*, 8: 538.
13. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 169.
14. *Complete Works*, 8: 525-26.
15. Swami Vivekananda to Mary Hale, June 23, 1900, SN Col.
16. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), p. 294.
17. *Complete Works*, 5: 176.
18. *Rem.* (Sister Nivedita), pp. 294-95.
19. Nivedita, *The Master*, p. 402.
20. Swami Annadananda, *Swami Akhandananda*, p. 185.
21. *Talks*, p. 282.
22. Nivedita to Nell Hammond, August 28, 1900, RKM, Belur.
23. *Complete Works*, 8: 537; see note 6 above.
24. *Rem.* (J. MacLeod), p. 249.
25. See note 23 above.
26. *Complete Works*, 7: 380, 381.

5

(Pages 737 to 755)

1. *Complete Works*, 7: 377.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 381, 382.
3. p. 383. The quotations that follow (pp. 743 to 747) from Swamiji's

NOTES TO PAGES 742-758

- "Memoirs of European Travel" are all to be found in *Complete Works*, 7: 386-399 passim.
4. Mary Mills Patrick, *A Bosporus Adventure*, pp. 103-5.
 5. Swami Vidyatmananda, "Swami Vivekananda and Père Hyacinthe Loyson," *P. B.* 76 (March 1971): 122, 124.
 6. *Life*, p. 709
 7. Swami Vivekananda to Alberta Sturges, November 1, 1900, RKM, Belur.
 8. *Brahmavadin* 6 (December 1900): 141, "Vedanta Work."
 9. *Life*, pp. 356-57.
 10. *Rem.* (Mme E. Calvé), pp. 268-69.
 11. Mme Paul Verdier, Notes, copies VSNC.
 12. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon*, p. 134. See also *Rem.* (J. MacLeod), p. 249.
 13. *Letters*, p. 409.
 14. *Complete Works*, 6: 433.
 15. J. MacLeod to Sara Bull, November, 29, 1900, SCB.
 16. *Complete Works*, 8: 539-40.

6

(Pages 755 to 758)

ERRATA

The lecture titles on the following pages should read as given here:

- p. 261, para. 1: "The 'Aryan Race" not "Aryan India."
- p. 266, para. 3: "Work and Its Secret" not "The Secret of Work."
- p. 481, para. 3: "Practical Religion: Breathing and Meditation" not "Practical Religion and Breathing."
- p. 490, para. 4: "Mind: Its Powers and Possibilities" not "Mind: Its Powers and Concentration."
- p. 583, para. 1: "Science of Breathing" not "Breathing."

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GLOSSARY

Sanskrit words in this glossary are transliterated according to standard practice, and their spelling therefore differs sometimes from that in the text. Thus, *ch* is changed to *c*, *sh* to *ś* or *ṣ*, and *ri* (when a vowel) to *ṛ*. Otherwise, diacritical marks, while necessary to grammar and accurate pronunciation, do not affect the alphabetical order.

adhikārivāda: literally, the doctrine of competency; the Hindu doctrine which states that only certain classes of people, endowed with certain qualifications, are entitled or fit to perform sacrifices and undertake spiritual practices.

advaita: literally, nondual; generally used for Advaita Vedānta, the monistic system of Vedānta philosophy.

Advaita Ashrama: a monastery of the Ramakrishna Order, situated at Mayavati in the Himalayas; it is dedicated to the practice and propagation of pure monism. Advaita Ashrama, which has a branch in Calcutta, publishes the magazine *Prabuddha Bharata* and other literature of the Ramakrishna Order.

Advaita Vedānta: the monistic system of the Vedānta philosophy, which teaches that the individual soul is really the Supreme Spirit and that in reality all is Spirit.

Advaitist: monist; follower of the monistic system of philosophy, Advaita Vedānta.

āmalaka: fruit of the āmalakī tree (*Emblīc myrobalan*).

Arjuna: a hero of the *Mahābhārata* and friend and disciple of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who imparted to him the teachings contained in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. He was one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers.

Aryan: an Anglicized derivation from *Ārya*, literally, noble; in ancient times, an inhabitant of Āryāvarta or Vedic India;

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

in later times, a member of any of the first three castes of the Hindus.

āsana: a seat; any sitting posture conducive to physical relaxation and mental serenity; third of the eight disciplines practiced according to rāja yoga by a seeker of spiritual knowledge.

āśrama: religious retreat, hermitage. Also, a state, order, or period of religious life.

Ātman: self or soul, considered by monistic (advaita) Vedānta as identical with Brahman, or the Supreme Spirit.

Ātmārām: delighting in one's Self, or in the Supreme Spirit; name sometimes used by Swami Vivekananda for Sri Ramakrishna. Also spelled *Ātmārāma*.

Avadhūta Gītā: "The Song of the Free"—a monistic philosophical treatise in Sanskrit consisting of eight chapters in verse, attributed to Dattātreyā, a sage of ancient India.

Avatāra: descent; appearance of God upon earth; a Divine Incarnation.

Bābājī: "Revered Father"; mode of addressing a holy man.

"banat banat ban jāi": Hindi expression used by Sri Ramakrishna, meaning "slowly and gradually it will come about." Also spelled *banata banata bani jāi*.

bandha: literally, to bind, restrain; in haṭha yoga, one of several attitudes of body employed during the practice of prāṇāyāma to help restrain the flow of prāṇa through idā and piṅgalā and direct it through suṣumnā.

Bhagavad Gītā: "Song of the Lord"—a cardinal Sanskrit scripture that occurs in chapters 25 to 42 of the "Bhīṣma Parvan" of the *Mahābhārata*. It embodies Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teaching given to his friend and disciple Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

Bhagavān: Lord, Holy One, the Personal God of devotees.

Bhāgavata(m): a sacred book of the Hindus, one of the best known of the eighteen Purāṇas; it contains narrations of the lives and deeds of the Avatāras of Viṣṇu, with particular elaboration of the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and also many

GLOSSARY

religious and philosophical discourses. Also called *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.

bhakta: one who follows the path of devotion, bhakti yoga; a worshiper of the Personal God.

bhakti: devotion to God.

bhakti yoga: the path of union with God through devotion.

Bhārata: India, so named in honor of Bharata, the celebrated hero and monarch of ancient India from whom a long line of kings descended.

bhoga: enjoyment.

bīja: seed, first cause; the syllable forming the first part of a mantra or sacred formula related to an aspect of God.

Brahmā: God as Creator of the universe.

brahmacārin: a spiritual aspirant who practices brahmacharya; a monastic who has taken the first vows. fem. *brahmacārīṇī*.

brahmacharya: the life or state characterized by religious vows, most important of which are chastity, service to the teacher, poverty, and study of the scriptures.

Brahma-jñāna: knowledge of Brahman through realizing one's identity with It.

Brahman: the one self-existent Impersonal Spirit; the Divine Essence from which all created things emanate, by which they are sustained, and to which they return; the Absolute.

Brāhmaṇa: one who has knowledge of Brahman, Divinity; one who knows and repeats the Vedas; a Hindu belonging to the highest caste.

Brahmavidyā: the supreme knowledge; the science of attaining the knowledge of Brahman.

Brahmin: an Anglicized form of Brāhmaṇa, the highest caste of the Hindus; a member of this caste. Brahmin religion: orthodox Hinduism.

Brāhmo Samāj: a theistic religious movement of India, started by Raja Rammohan Roy in the nineteenth century.

Buddha: the Enlightened One; title of Gautama Siddhārtha, the founder of Buddhism, who was born in northern India

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

and is considered by the Hindus to be an Incarnation of God.(563-483 B.C.)

Buddhism: religion and philosophy of Gautama Buddha, teaching that nirvāṇa (extinction, release from individual existence) is the ultimate goal of life.

capāti: unleavened bread made of flour and water. Also, *chapati*.

celā: disciple. Anglicized, *chela*.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad: one of the oldest and most important of the Upaniṣads, a principal text of the Vedānta philosophy.

Caitanya: spiritual teacher, born in Navadvip, Bengal, who is looked upon by the Hindus as a Divine Incarnation. He emphasized the path of devotion to God, whom he worshiped in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (A.D. 1485-1533).

Caṇḍāla: one born of a Śūdra father and a Brahmin mother, and forming a low mixed caste. Also: *Cāṇḍāla*.

citta: mind-stuff; one of the four inner organs. The other three are the mind (*manas*), the discriminating faculty (*buddhi*), and the ego (*ahaṁkāra*). Also, *chitta*.

cudder: a large rectangular piece of cloth worn as an upper garment by Indian men. Also, *chudder* or *chādar*.

Dakshineswar banyan: a large banyan tree in the garden of the Dakshineswar Kālī temple under which Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples often meditated. By extension the term is used for the *pañcavaṭi*, or grove of five sacred trees of different species, which were planted by Sri Ramakrishna according to scriptural injunctions.

Dhammapada: "Path of Virtue"—a part of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, one of the three canonical collections of Buddha's teachings.

darśan: seeing; by extension, the blessing one gets from seeing a holy person or a deity in a temple.

dayā: sympathy, compassion.

dhāraṇā: literally, the act of holding; collection or concentration of the mind on some object, either within or outside the body, and holding it in that state; the sixth of the eight disciplines or "limbs" of rāja yoga.

GLOSSARY

dharma: literally, that which firmly supports or upholds; moral and religious truth; right conduct; action in relation to temporal rather than spiritual pursuits.

Dhīrā Mātā: name given to Sara C. Bull by Swami Vivekananda. *dhīrā:* steady, patient, courageous; *mātā:* mother.

dhoti: long lower garment worn by Indian men.

dhuni: sacred fire lighted by monks and holy men.

dhyāna: meditation; the state of uninterrupted concentration of the mind on one object; seventh of the eight disciplines or "limbs" of rāja yoga.

dikṣā: initiation into spiritual practice.

Ātama: a name of Buddha.

Gāyatrī: a sacred stanza from the Vedas repeated by Brāhmaṇas at their morning and evening devotions.

gerua: the ocher dye used for the robes of monks in India; a cloth of ocher color.

Ġītā: a divine song; specifically, the *Bhagavad Ġītā*.

gñāna yoga: variant spelling of jñāna yoga, the path of knowledge.

Guḍākeśa: "Conqueror of Sleep"—an epithet of Arjuna.

guṇa: literally, rope; quality; one of the three constitutive elements of every phenomenon: *tamas* (inertia), *rajas* (activity), and *sattva* (purity, illumination).

guru: teacher; spiritual preceptor.

Guru Mahārāj: respectful name used by a disciple in referring to his teacher; specifically, Sri Ramakrishṇa.

gurub hāis: disciples of the same guru, or spiritual teacher.

Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom: an expression symbolic of the infinite, formless Divinity. *Hara:* a name of Śiva; *Vyom:* a derivative of *vyoma*, space.

Hariḥ Om Tat Sat: a mantra for meditation on Brahman.

Hari: a name of God as Viṣṇu; *Om:* the sound symbol of Divinity in all aspects; *Tat Sat:* That Reality.

haṭha yoga: a system of yoga which stresses physical methods, such as breath control, either for awakening Kuṇḍalinī in order to attain liberation, or for achieving good

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

physique, longevity, and extraordinary physical and psychic powers.

Hrīm (Hrīṅ): a sacred word, or mantra, representing the śakti or power aspect of God and used in meditation and ceremonial worship. Also, *Hrim* or *Hring*.

Hūm (Hūṅ): a sacred word, or mantra, representing an aspect of God and used in meditation and ceremonial worship. Also, *Hung* or *Hum*.

idā: one of the principal channels of the vital force, the nerve current on the left side of the spinal column, according to haṭha yoga.

Iṣṭa(m): the Chosen; the aspect of God chosen by a devotee as the object of his worship and meditation.

Jaḍa Bharata: a knower of God, formerly King Bharata of ancient India, who because of his affection for a fawn was reborn as a deer. In his following birth as a man, he was called Jaḍa Bharata because he simulated stupidity to avoid attachment to any being. *Jaḍa*: inanimate, stupid.

jagadguru: world teacher; a spiritual teacher whose teaching is so universal and imbued with such power that it benefits all mankind.

Jain: pertaining to Jainism, a non-Vedic religious system of India older than Buddhism; it is still practiced in India.

jālaṁdhara: a position (*bandha*) of haṭha yoga in which the chin is pressed to the chest or root of the neck during retention of breath in prāṇāyāma in order to regulate the flow of prāṇa into suṣumnā.

japa(m): repetition of a name of God with concentration.

“Jay [Jai] Sītā-Rāma”: “Victory to Sītā and Rāma”—a salutation to the Divine Incarnation Rāma and his consort Sītā, whose story is told in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

jīvanmukta: one who, though free from ignorance, continues to live in the body.

jñāna: knowledge of the Self or Brahman in which the identity of the soul and the Supreme Spirit is realized; the path by which this knowledge is attained.

GLOSSARY

jñāna yoga: the path of union with God through Self-knowledge.

jñānī: follower of the path of jñāna, knowledge; one who has attained to divine knowledge.

Kālī: name of God as the Divine Śakti, or Energy; Mother of the universe.

Kālidās(a): Sanskrit poet and dramatist, author of the drama *Abhiññāna-Śākuntalam*, which has been translated into English under the title *Shakuntala*. (5th cent. A.D.)

karmā: action; impression left on the mind after any experience; the law of causality in the mental-moral world; ritual.

Karma Kāṇḍa: the first portions of the Vedas, dealing with ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites, contrasted with the Jñāna Kāṇḍa, or philosophical portions, comprising the Upanisads.

karma yoga: the path of union with God through selfless action.

karma yogin: follower of the path of selfless action, karma yoga.

kartāl: small cymbals used as an accompaniment for devotional singing.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad: one of the principal Upaniṣads, belonging to the Kaṭha school of the Kṛṣṇa Yajur-veda.

khichuri: Indian dish of lentils, spices, and rice. Also spelled *khicaḍī*.

khol: small earthen drum used in religious music festivals in Bengal.

kīrtan: devotional music and dancing; devotional singing.

Krishna: Anglicized spelling of Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa: an Incarnation of God in ancient India, teacher of the philosophy embodied in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Kṣatriya: the second principal caste of the Hindus, that of kings and warriors; a member of this caste. Also, *Kshatriya*.

kuṁbhaka: retention of breath, an essential practice of prāṇāyāma.

Kuṇḍalinī Śakti: literally, “coiled energy”; the Divine Energy, which is dormant at the base of the spine in all individuals until it is aroused. It then ascends, together with the consciousness of the individual, to the brain, to merge in the Supreme Consciousness.

Kurukṣetra: an extensive plain near Delhi, the scene of the ancient dynastic war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, as recounted in the *Mahābhārata*. On this battlefield Śrī Kṛṣṇa imparted to Arjuna the teachings later incorporated in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Lalitā: name given to Carrie Mead Wyckoff by Swami Turiyananda. *Lalitā*: a name of the Divine Mother.

madgutaṇṇī: or mulligatawny, a south Indian soup made with pepper and other spices. Correct spelling, *mulagu taṇṇī*.

Mahābhārata: a Sanskrit epic, attributed to Vyāsa, which describes the conflict between the Kuru princes (Kauravas) and the sons of Pāṇḍu (Pāṇḍavas). It is a virtual encyclopedia of Hindu mythology, philosophy, and moral and spiritual teachings.

Mahārāj: great king; one of noble presence; term of respect usually applied to monks and in the Ramakrishna Order particularly used for Swami Brahmananda.

mahāsamādhi: death of one who has already attained liberation in life.

Mahātmā: great soul; a high-souled person. In Theosophy, one of a class of holy persons.

mahāvākya: great utterance or declaration; name given to certain sacred dicta in the Upaniṣads, such as “Tat tvam asi,” “That thou art.”

Mahāvīra: “Great Hero,” an epithet of Hanumān, the great devotee of Śrī Rāma.

mantra: instrument of thought; word or combination of words representing an aspect or the fullness of divine nature and reality, considered to have the power to awaken spiritual consciousness when repeated with devotion and concentration.

GLOSSARY

Maṭh: monastery; here specifically Belur Monastery near Calcutta, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order of monks.

Māyā: ignorance, illusion; the indefinable power by which the Absolute, while preserving Its changeless character, appears as the changing universe.

Mīrābāī: a queen of Chitor who renounced the world and became a saint. Her fervent songs of devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa are sung all over India. (1547-1614)

mleccha: foreigner, barbarian; a non-Āryan or any person who does not speak Sanskrit or conform to Hindu institutions.

mokṣa: spiritual liberation; release from worldly existence and rebirth.

mudrās: in haṭha yoga, certain positions of the body employed to control the movement of the prāṇas and thereby awaken the spiritual force (Kuṇḍalinī Śakti). These mudrās, which are not to be confused with hand gestures used in ceremonial worship, are variously listed as ten to twenty-five in number.

mūlabandha: in haṭha yoga the bandha, or position, in which the perineum is pressed with the heel while the rectal muscles are contracted, to force prāṇa upward.

Naciketā: the boy hero of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* who, because of his steadfast faith, was taught the secret of death and the way to Self-realization by Yama, god of death.

Namaḥ Śivāya: "Salutations to Śiva."

Nārada-Bhakti-Sūtras: "Aphorisms on Devotion," a text attributed to the immortal sage Nārada, who appears in the Purāṇas as a great devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

nirvāṇa: absolute extinction of individual existence, the goal of Buddhism.

niṣkāma karma: action free of desire for and attachment to its fruits; selfless action.

niṣkāma karmī: one who works without desire or attachment.

Niveditā: "Dedicated"; monastic name of Margaret (Margot)

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Elizabeth Noble, Ulster-born disciple of Swami Vivekananda. (1867-1911)

niyama: a course of moral discipline prescribed by rāja yoga as the second prerequisite of yoga. According to the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali, it consists in cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of the scriptures, and meditation on God.

Om: sound symbol of Brahman; the most sacred word of the Vedas.

palāo: dish made of rice and meat with seasoning. Correct spelling, *pulāo*.

Pāñcāla: belonging to the country of Pañcāl (present Punjab). The Pāñcālas were staunch supporters of the Pāṇḍavas. Draupadī, wife of the Pāṇḍavas, was the daughter of Drupada, king of the Pāñcālas.

Pāṇḍavas: the five sons of Pāṇḍu—Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva—whose heroic struggles against the Kurus for their rightful kingdom are recounted in the Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*.

Pāṇini Aṣṭādhyāyī: “Eight Books of Pāṇini”—a Sanskrit grammar written by the celebrated grammarian Pāṇini.

paramahansa: literally, supreme swan; a monk belonging to the highest order of sannyāsins; one who has realized Brahman.

Paramātman: Supreme Self.

Parbutty: Anglicized spelling of *Pārvatī*. The Divine Mother in the aspect of daughter of Himavat, king of the snowy mountains, and consort of Śiva.

Pārtha: son of Prthā (also known as Kuntī) specifically, Arjuna.

Patañjali: Indian philosopher of the second century B.C. who founded the Yoga system (one of the six orthodox philosophical systems of the Hindus), author of the *Yoga Sūtra* and of the *Mahābhāṣya*, the famous commentary on Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (Sanskrit grammar).

Pavhārī Bābā: “Air-eating Father,” a nineteenth century ascetic and yogī of great distinction living at Gazipur on

GLOSSARY

- the Ganga, whom Swami Vivekananda visited and held in high regard.
- piṅgalā: one of the principal channels of the vital force, the nerve current on the right side of the spinal cord, according to haṭha yoga.
- Prahlāda: a great devotee of Viṣṇu (God as Sustainer) from early childhood. His story is told in the *Bhāgavata*.
- prāṇa: vital breath; life; respiration; vitality.
- Praṇaya: the sacred mantra Om, sound symbol of Brahman.
- prāṇāyāma: control of vital energy (prāṇa) through breathing exercises; fourth of the eight disciplines of rāja yoga.
- pratyāhāra: sense-withdrawal; the process of detaching the subtle sense organs from the corresponding outer instruments of the physical body, fifth of the eight disciplines of rāja yoga.
- Pravrāṇikā: title of a woman ascetic who has renounced the world to become a religious mendicant; a sannyāsini, or nun.
- Prthā (Prithā): mother of Arjuna. Also known as Kuntī.
- Prthvirāj (Prithi Rai): Rajput hero, king of Ajmer and Delhi, whose defeat by Muhammad Ghorī of Ghur at Thāṇeśwar in 1192 marked the beginning of Muslim domination in northern India.
- Purāṇa: literally, ancient; ancient tale or legend; one of eighteen well-known books in Sanskrit containing accounts of creation, mythologies, stories of saints and kings, and discourses on philosophy and religion.
- Rājā: king; a name by which Swami Brahmananda was often addressed.
- rāja yoga: royal yoga; the science of controlling the mind for the purpose of realizing the pure Self as disidentified from prakṛti (nature), i.e. mind, body, etc. It was systematized by Patañjali in the *Yoga Sūtra*.
- rajas: the quality of activity or restlessness; one of the three guṇas, or constitutive elements of phenomena.
- rajasic: Anglicized form of *rājasika*.

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

rājasika: pertaining to rajas, the quality of activity or restlessness.

Rāma (Rāmachandra): a king of ancient India, hero of the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, who is looked upon as an Incarnation of God.

Rama mrgi: a term found in Emma Thursby's notes that may be *Rāma mārḡi*, "follower of Rāma" or "one who is in quest of Rāma."

Rāmāyaṇa: a Sanskrit epic relating the lives of the divine hero Rāma and his consort Sītā, attributed to the sage Vālmīki.

Ramakrishna Parama Hamsa: a name for Sri Ramakrishna. See *paramahansa*.

ṛṣi: inspired poet-sage; seer to whom the Vedic hymns were revealed in prehistoric times; any illumined sage to whom spiritual truths have been revealed. Also, *rishi*.

Saccidānanda: absolute Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss; the highest possible description of God. Also, *Satchidānanda*.

sādhu: holy man; monk.

sahita: according to the *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā*, a type of prāṇāyāma for the purification of the nerves in which the breath is inhaled through the left nostril, retained for some time, and exhaled through the right nostril; then the process is repeated in reverse order. This sequence is repeated as required. It is the safest of the eight types of prāṇāyāma. Also known as *aṇuloma-viloma*.

Śakti: the Creative Power of Brahman; the Divine Energy as the Mother of the universe.

Śakuntalā: a well-known Sanskrit drama by Kālidāsa, the full title being *Abhijñāna-Śākuntalam*, "Recognition of Śakuntalā."

Śākyamuni: literally, monk of the Śākya house; name by which Gautama Buddha was known when he first preached his message.

Śālagrāma-Śilā: a black oval stone found chiefly near the village of Śālagrāma in Uttar Pradesh and the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh; such stones are worshiped by

GLOSSARY

- Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Viṣṇu) as symbols of the all-pervading presence of God.
- samādhi: superconscious experience in which the mind, attaining to the ultimate state of calmness and concentration, becomes one with Divine Reality.
- Sāṃkhya: oldest of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, ascribed to Kapila. According to Sāṃkhya, reality is composed of two ultimate entities, puruṣa (spirit) and prakṛti (nature). Also, *Sāṃkhya*.
- Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad: the Upaniṣad derived from or composed by the sage Śāṇḍilya.
- Śaṅkarācārya: the teacher (ācārya) Śaṅkara, a great knower of God who lived in India in the eighth century A.D. He was the foremost exponent of and commentator on monistic Vedānta; among his most important works are commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads, the *Brahma Sūtra*, and the *Bhagavad Gītā*.
- sannyāsa: complete renunciation; monasticism.
- sannyāsi, sannyāsin: monk; one who has completely renounced all worldly position, property, and name and devotes himself entirely to the attainment of spiritual realization. fem. *sannyāsinī*.
- Sanskrit: the ancient Āryan language of India, then known as *Daivivāk* (Divine language), which was later systematized by the great grammarians like Pāṇini, Kātyāyana, and Patañjali (700-150 B.C.) and became known as Sanskrit. Literally, "the perfect," from saṃskṛta, perfected, refined. Also, *Sanscrit*.
- śānti: peace.
- sari: Anglicized form of sādī, a draped garment of Indian women that consists of five, six, or nine yards of lightweight cloth.
- śāstras: authoritative scriptures of the Hindus.
- śāstrī: one versed in the śāstras, or scriptures; a learned man; a teacher of sacred learning.
- sattva: the quality of tranquillity, purity, virtue, and

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

illumination; one of the three *guṇas*, or constitutive elements of phenomena.

sattvic: Anglicized form of *sāttvika*.

sāttvika: pertaining to *sattva*, the quality of purity, goodness, and illumination; one possessed of *sattva*, or spiritual tendencies.

savikalpa: admitting of distinction, differentiated; a state of meditation on Brahman in which a faint distinction exists between knower, knowable, and method of knowledge.

sevā: service; to attend upon, serve, honor.

Shanti: Sanskrit name given to Alice Hansbrough by Swami Turiyananda, meaning peace (*śānti*).

Shanti Ashrama: "Peace Retreat"—a quarter section of land near Mount Hamilton in California, belonging to the Vedanta Society of Northern California. It was established as a retreat (*āśrama*) by Swami Turiyananda in 1900 on the instructions of Swami Vivekananda.

Sītā: the wife of Rāma, whose story is told in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. She is regarded in India as the ideal woman.

Śiva: Auspicious One; a name of God, specifically in the aspects of compassion and destruction of ignorance. In the Purāṇas, Śiva is spoken of as the Supreme Being and is so worshiped by his followers, the Śaivas. He is also known as the third god of the Hindu triad, responsible for the destruction of the world, the other two gods being Brahmā the Creator and Viṣṇu the Preserver.

Śiva-Liṅga: symbol of Śiva in the form of a stone column.

Śiva-Rātri: fourteenth day of the dark half of Māgha (February-March), on which a rigorous fast is observed, particularly by the devotees of Śiva. Throughout the night, worship is done in honor of Śiva.

Śivoham: "I am Śiva"—a mantra for the realization of God.

śloka: a stanza in Sanskrit.

Śrī: holy, sacred, auspicious, gracious; a word frequently used as an honorific prefix.

GLOSSARY

Sri Sarada Devi: spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, more usually known as “the Holy Mother.” (1853-1920)

śrutis: the Vedas, including the Upaniṣads; scriptures embodying truth directly revealed to seers.

Śūdras: members of the fourth caste of the Hindus.

Śuka Deva: Śuka, son of Vyāsa and narrator of the *Bhāgavata* to King Parīkṣit. *deva:* godlike.

Śūnyavādī: nihilist; one who believes in the Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of Śūnya, the Void, first formulated by Nāgārjuna.

Ṣuṣumnā: the channel (central canal) within the spinal column, extending from the base of the spine to the brain, through which spiritual energy (Kuṇḍalinī) rises when awakened as a result of yoga practices.

Sutta-Nipāta: part of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, second of three canonical collections of Buddha’s teachings.

Śvāhā: an invocation used by the worshiper when making oblations to the gods in Vedic rituals.

swāmī: literally, master of himself; spiritual teacher; with capital, a title of Vedāntic monks.

Swāmijī: a respectful title of Vedantic monks; specifically, Swami Vivekananda. *jī* is a suffix expressing deep respect.

tamas: one of the three guṇas, or constitutive elements of phenomena; the quality of darkness, inertia, or ignorance.

tamasic: Anglicized form of *tāmasika*.

tāmasika: pertaining to tamas, the guṇa (quality) of darkness.

tamoguṇa: the guṇa (quality) of tamas.

Tantras: a class of works (mostly in the form of dialogues between Śiva and his consort Umā) which treat of five subjects: creation, destruction of the universe, worship of the gods, attainment of all objects, and modes of union with the Supreme Spirit by meditation.

Tāntric Yoga: spiritual discipline peculiar to the Tantras.

Tat tvam asi: “That thou art”—one of the four Vedic dicta stating the identity of the individual soul and the Supreme

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Soul, the goal of monistic Vedānta. It occurs in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.

tattvas: truths, principles of reality that make up the components of phenomena.

Ṭhākur Ghar: literally, chapel of the Lord (Ṭhākur); here, the chapel at Belur Monastery in which daily worship was offered to Sri Ramakrishna until the present temple of Sri Ramakrishna was built.

uḍḍiāna: a haṭha yoga practice (*bandha*) in which the lungs are emptied by a strong expiration as the abdomen is forcibly drawn in to lift the diaphragm, thus aiding the prāṇa to rise and enter suṣumnā during the process of prāṇāyāma.

Upaniṣads: Sanskrit texts, more than a hundred in number, embodying records of spiritual realizations of ṛṣis (seers) of ancient India; the philosophical portions of the Vedas, regarded as the source of the Vedānta philosophy and the other five orthodox philosophical systems of India.

Vaiśyas: members of the third principal caste of Hindu society, composed of merchants and cultivators.

Veda(s): knowledge; true or sacred knowledge; ancient scriptures of India, considered to have been revealed to seers. The Vedas are divided into four books: *R̥k*, *Sāma*, *Yajus*, and *Atharva*, of which the philosophical portions are known as *Upaniṣads*.

Vedānta: literally, end of the Vedas, the final philosophy of the Vedas, as expressed in the Upaniṣads. Vedānta, one of the six orthodox systems of philosophy accepted in India, is interpreted from either the monistic, the qualified monistic, or the dualistic point of view. It maintains the ultimate Reality to be Brahman.

Vedantic: pertaining to the Vedānta system of philosophy.

Vedāntin: one who accepts the Vedānta teachings and lives according to them.

Vedantism: the religion and philosophy of Vedānta; the ideas and spirit of Vedānta.

GLOSSARY

- Veda-Vyāsa:** Vyāsa, "Arranger of the Vedas." See *Vyāsa*.
- Vikramāditya:** a king of Ujjain, generally identified with Chandra Gupta II (*circa* A.D. 380-413), who was surnamed Vikramāditya. For the legend of the judgment seat of Vikramāditya, see Sister Niveditā's *Cradle Tales of Hinduism and Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*.
- Vrindāvan:** a cowherd village on the bank of the Yamunā River where Śrī Kṛṣṇa passed his boyhood. Also, *Vrindāban*.
- Vyāsa:** celebrated mythical sage, the reputed compiler of the Vedas and author of the *Mahābhārata* and other important works of Hindu sacred literature.
- yama:** primary virtue, the first of the eight disciplines of rāja yoga. It includes the practice of nonviolence, truthfulness, nonstealing, chastity, and nonacceptance of gifts.
- Yaśodharā:** wife of Gautama Siddhārtha, who became the Buddha.
- yoga:** superconscious experience of Reality, in which there is cessation of all modifications of the mind; union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul; a particular path by which this union may be attained. With capital, one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, ascribed to Patañjali, author of the *Yoga Aphorisms (Sūtras)*.
- yogī:** one who has attained to the state of yoga; one who is practicing yoga as a means to Self-realization, or God-realization.

INDEX

- Abbot, Lyman, 301
- Abhayanaṇḍa, Swami (Mme Marie Louise), 416-17, 634, 644
- Abhedananda, Swami (Kali), 96, 101, 133, 593, 607, 636, 673-74, 720; in London, 51, 53; in New York, 54, 103, 123, 124-25, 637, 642-43, 644, 646, 655-56, 663, 674
- Adams, Henry, 690
- Adams, Mrs. Milward (Florence), 41, 42, 100, 103, 144, 684
- Addams, Jane, 684
- Aden, 33, 45
- Adhikarivada*, 11-12
- Advaita *śāstra*, *Mayavati*, 753
- Advaita Vedānta. *see* Vedānta Philosophy; *see also* Vivekananda, Swami, teachings
- l'Aiglon*, 692, 743
- Ajit Singh. *See* Khetri, Raja of
- Akhandananda, Swami (Gangadhar), 14, 40, 720, 734
- Alambazar. *See* Ramakrishna Math, Alambazar
- Alameda, 481, 501, 502, 503-4, 509, 525-26, 532-33, 534; Tucker's Hall, 503, 506, 508-9, 510, 512, 513, 514, 515. *See also* Home of Truth, Alameda
- Alasinga Perumal, 24-25, 25-26
- Albers, Christina, 346-47
- Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll), 223
- Allan, Edith (Mrs. Thomas J.), 311, 318-19, 348, 373-74, 451, 494, 512, 526; at Turk Street flat, 408-12; at Alameda Home of Truth, 412-14, 520, 522-23; at California Street Home of Truth, 490-91
- Allan, Thomas J., 184, 310-11, 334-35, 336, 365, 366, 492, 494, 521-22, 526; as usher, 334-35, 365; and Mrs. Allan, 415, 460, 495, 496, 516, 538, 553; and ship launching, 430-32
- America: need for Ashramas in, 636; Vedānta in, 57, 61, 479-80; church ministers of, 281, 302; SV's promise in 1897 to return to, 41
- Ansell, Ida (Ujjvala), 339, 373, 431, 449, 475-76, 533, 666; at California Street Home of Truth, 489-90; at Camp Taylor, 531-54; takes notes of lectures, 338, 339-40, 350, 353-54, 367, 370, 446-48, 452, 453, 474, 486, 515, 565-66, 592-94; transcribes notes, 340-43, 344, 452, 453
- Applegarth, George A., 311-12
- Arabian Sea, 29-31
- Arena*, 124
- Arjuna, 570, 571, 571-72, 583-84, 585-86, 587, 595; SV thought of as, 115
- Arunachalam (friend of Nivedita's in Ceylon), 28
- Asana, 375-76, 384, 387, 394
- Ashokananda, Swami, 39, 162-63, 337, 340, 341-43, 344
- Aspinall, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin, 279, 432, 533
- Aspinall, Emily (Mrs. Benjamin), 256, 335, 424-25, 460, 489, 523, 524, 558; and SV, 322-23, 530-31, 533-34, 543, 551; at Camp Taylor, 531, 533-34, 543, 546; in Alameda, 501, 517, 519, 526; and Shanti Ashrama, 665, 666
- Ashton-Jonson, Mrs., 59, 63, 81; and Nivedita, 74, 79, 103; and SV, 78, 79
- "At the Feet of the Motherland" (Nivedita), 26-27
- Atman, 45, 354, 403, 586-87, 594, 623,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

628. *See also* Vivekananda, Swami, teachings: Advaita Vedanta
 Atmaprana, Pravrajika, *Sister Nivedita*, 69, 710, 712
 Atmaram, 420
 Atulananda, Swami. *See* Gurudasa
Avadhuta Gita, 389
- Bagley, Mrs. John, 186, 672
 Barberts, the (Chicago friends), 144
 Basu, Sachindranath (later Swami Shubhananda), 15, 16-17
 Basu, Sankari Prasad, *Lokamata Nivedita*, 120
 Battle Creek health foods, 139
 Baumgardt, Bernhard R., 150-51, 162, 169, 202, 214-16, 238; introduces SV's lectures, 156, 159, 167
 Baumgardt, Mrs. Bernhard R., 151, 214
 Beckham, Lucy (Home of Truth leader), 502, 503
 Bell, Lydia, 411, 489, 539, 540-41, 546, 554; directs California Street Home of Truth, 339, 340, 445; at Camp Taylor, 531, 545-46, 548-49, 631; Ida Ansell and, 550, 554; and Shanti Ashrama, 665, 666
 Belur Math. *See* Ramakrishna Math, Belur
 "Benediction, A," 721
 Bengal, Bay of, 18, 20-22
 Bengali language, 17-18, 45; Nivedita and, 661, 662
 Bengalis, 20, 26, 41
 Berkeley temple, Vedanta Society of Northern California, 337
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 684, 692, 743
 Besant, Annie, 8
 Betts, Mr. and Mrs. (Alameda friends), 525
 Bhagavad Gita. *See* Gita
Bhagavata(m), 569, 574, 575, 587
 Bhakti yoga, 586, 588, 612, 628; and karma yoga, 580-82; lectures on, 236, 260, 268, 485-89, 492, 514.
- See also* Divine Love
Bhakti Yoga, 613
 Bhuvaneswari Datta. *See* Datta, Bhuvaneswari
 Biligiri (Iyengar), 24
 Blodgett, Mrs. S. K., 112-13, 171, 172; describes SV's stay, 173-75, 212, 213
 Boer War, 364, 657
 Bogesh (missionary on *Golconda*), 32-33, 45
 Bois, Jules, 701-2, 755; SV stays with in Paris, 683-84, 688, 689, 700-1, 702-4, 728-29; at Belur Math, 704-5; *Prabuddha Bharata* editorial on, 706; visits Brittany with SV, 710, 716, 727-28; goes on tour with SV, 740, 746, 749
 Bombay, 756-57
 Boock, Minnie, 22, 663, 666, 671
 Bose, Jagadis Chandra, 724
 Bowler, Emeline F., 213, 243-44, 255, 256, 314
 Brahmacharya, 8, 62, 417
 Brahman, 354, 512, 513, 627
 Brahmananda, Swami (Rakhal, Raja, Maharaj), 9, 14, 256, 733; in charge of financial affairs of the Math, 4, 66-67, 527; urges SV to go to West, 5-6; and SV, 39, 44, 140, 720; trustee of the Math, 210, 718, 720; President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, 725, 732
Brahmavadin, 26
 Brahmins, 415, 568-69, 593, 621-22
 Brahmo Samaj, 38
 Bransby, J. Ransome, 184, 185, 191-92, 197-98
 Briggs, Mrs. Isabel L. (friend of Mrs. Bull's), 681, 714, 716
 Brittany, 699-700, 715, 716
 Brooklyn Ethical Association, 303, 467
 Brothers of SV. *See* Datta, Bhupendranath; Datta, Mahendranath
 Brown, Charlotte (Mrs. Rhodehamel's sister), 375
 Brown, Ernest C., 349-50, 443

INDEX

- Bruce, Mrs. (Pasadena friend), 227
 Buddha, 270-71, 350-55, 404, 608
 Buddhism, 250-51, 576, 577, 610
 "Buddhistic India," 249
 Bull, Sara Chapman (Mrs. Ole, Dhiramata), 3, 4, 5, 46, 381-82, 696, 696-97, 724, 725; friendship with Swami Saradananda, 6, 43-44, 139, 169, 211; and E. T. Sturdy, 57, 59, 77, 92; helps Ramakrishna Math, 67-68, 79, 141, 210, 211, 718, 719; SV's regard for, 89-90, 122, 210-11, 527, 529, 721; and Olea Vaughan, 77, 95, 99, 105, 106, 117, 709; SV gives gerua to at Ridgely, 120-21, 122; and Swami Abhedananda, 494, 527, 643; and Nivedita, 657, 662, 710, 714; in Brittany, 699-700, 708, 709-10, 714-17; SV addresses her as "Sacred Cow", 131
- Calcutta, 1, 6, 8-9, 16-17; SV thinks of living with mother in, 483, 484; meeting to honor SV, 508
 California: as field for Vedanta, 253-54, 601, 604, 606-7; people of, 148-49, 214, 235, 253-54, 260, 277-80, 286, 493
 —early Vedanta centers in: Los Angeles and Pasadena, 253-56, 257, 492, 496, 637; in San Francisco, 440, 492, 494-99, 514
 —and SV: gives highest teachings in, 257-58, 620, 627-32; idyllic mood in, 618-20
California Express, 147
 California Institute of Technology, 253
 Calkins, Reeves (missionary on *Rubabino*), 755-56
 Calvé, Emma, 146, 147, 684, 735, 737-40, 746; memories of SV, 748-51, 751-52
 Cambridge Conferences, 140, 303
 Camp Taylor (Camp Irving), 496, 514, 530-31, 533; description of, 537-41, 544, 546; hotel at, 531, 551, 552; photographs of, 538-39, 546; SV at, 541-55
 Canovara, Countess of, 28
 Canyon Crest Park, Redlands, 217
 Captain of S.S. *Golconda*, 23, 29-30, 31, 32, 36
 Carlyle, Thomas, 573
 Carnegie, Andrew, 468
 Carroll, Lewis, 223
 Centre Vedantique-Ramakrichna, Gretz, France, 681
 Ceylon, 26-29, 33
 Chakravarti, Satishchandra (Swami Saradananda's brother), 31, 61, 63
 Chakravarty, Saratchandra (disciple of SV), 419, 472, 573, 580, 586, 588, 589, 625; SV initiates, 403, 416
 Chambers (San Francisco friend), 496
 Chamier (English friend in Madras), 24
Champagne, La, S.S., 677, 678
 Chatterjy, Mohini, 41
 Chelsea (London); SV holds classes in, 50
 Cheney, Mrs. John Vance, 505
 Cheney, Judge, 150
 Cheney Section, Alameda, 504-5, 505-6, 525
Chhandogya Upanishad, 572
 Chicago: SV visits, 143-45, 640-41; World's Fair, 690-91, 707, 736
 Chidrupananda, Swami (formerly Alfred T. Clifton), 163, 757
 Chinese in San Francisco, 426-28
 Christ: devotion of SV to, 137, 213; in evil as well as in good, 196, 270; lectures by SV on, 193, 202-3, 270, 344, 345-47; quoted by SV, 272, 451; and the Social Gospel, 466, 467-68, 470; healing by, 519; SV compared to, 602, 603
 —teachings of, 473, 576; not followed in West, 577-78
 Christian Literature Society of Madras, 155, 301
 Christian Socialism, 465, 466-68, 590
 Chosen Ideal. *See* Ishta

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- Christine, Sister (Christine Greenstidel), 671-72, 725; at Thousand Island Park, 62-63, 417; in London, 62, 63, 68, 69; on S.S. *Numidian*, 70-71; memories of SV in New York, 676-77; SV writes to in French, 729, 732, 735, 735-36
- Clifton, Alfred T. (Swami Chidrupananda), 3, 163, 757
- Cohn, Mrs. Paul (Dorothy Hansbrough), 218, 220, 222-23, 224, 231, 256, 423
- Colombo 25, 27-29, 300
- Conger, Mrs. Cornelia (daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lyon), 144
- Concord movement and the Gita, 573
- "Congress of cranks," 696-700
- Congress of History of Religions (Paris), 679, 695, 706-8
- Congress of Religions (Oakland), 280-81, 287, 289-90, 294-300
- Constantinople (Istanbul), 741, 742, 745, 746-48
- Contortionist, 180-81
- Coomara Swami, Sir, 28
- Coulston, Mrs., 95, 96, 99-100, 558
- Coyle, R. F. (Presbyterian minister in Oakland), 289-90, 307
- Crane, Mrs. (housekeeper in Vedanta Society of New York), 558, 642, 674, 675
- Crompton, Dr. Arnold (minister of First Unitarian Church, Oakland), 337
- Crossley, Mrs. (friend of Mrs. Bull's), 94
- Das Gupta, Ranadaprasad (artist), 676
- Darjeeling, 41, 55-56
- Datta, Bhupendranath, 483; *Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet*, 18
- Datta, Bhuvaneswari, 319, 320-22, 366; SV worries over, 482, 483, 483-84
- Datta, Mahendranath, 88, 89, 482, 483
- Dedicated, Th.* (Reymond), 68-69, 712-13, 723
- Detroit, 62, 640, 642, 671-73
- Devamata, Sister (Laura Glenn), 107, 674-75, 675-76
- Dhammapada*, 589
- Dharana, 387, 397, 402
- Dhyana, 387, 388, 402-4
- Divine Love: in the *Bhagavatam*, 587-88; love for love's sake, 389, 610; Sri Krishna's teaching on, 569; SV speaks on, 486, 488-89, 610. *See also* Bhakti yoga
- Divine Mother, 16, 17, 121, 192, 230-31, 413, 519, 524, 547; Mrs. Bull and, 121, 210, 211; faith of SV in, 367, 527, 528, 530, 541, 669; as Kali, 116, 119, 231, 639; SV lectures on, 650-51; Nivedita and, 119, 722, 723, 724; relationship of SV with, 189, 212, 322, 420-21, 527-28, 529, 530, 541, 730-31, 733; will of, 211, 533, 665, 692, 701
- Dorothy (Mrs. Hansbrough's daughter). *See* Cohn, Mrs. Paul
- Dresser, Horatio W., 124
- Dutcher, Mary Elizabeth, 590
- Dutt, Romesh Chandra, 724
- "East and the West, The" (*Prachya O Paschatya*), 18, 250, 678
- Edwina (child of Olea Vaughan), 43
- Egypt, 33, 46, 735, 748, 750-51, 752, 753-55
- Eliot, Charles W., 301, 303
- Elliot, A. H. (president of First Unitarian Church, Oakland), 305-6
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 153, 337, 573
- English, the: attitude of toward India, 74, 753; donations of to Vedanta work, 79, 82, 85, 92; and monistic Vedanta, 51; SV's opinion of in 1896, 51-52; treatment of SV by, 88-89
- Everett, Charles Carroll, 363, 507

INDEX

- Fairbanks, Miss (Meads' housekeeper), 221
- Farmer, Sarah, 42, 101, 644
- First Unitarian Church. *See* Unitarian Church, First, Oakland
- Foster, Dr. William (physician in San Francisco), 557
- Forum* article on Hindu cults by Jules Bois, 701-2, 703-4, 705-6
- Fox, Fredrica, 337
- Fox, Rebecca, 294, 295, 336, 337
- Fox, Sarah, 294-95, 336, 337, 441
- France: culture of in 1900, 688-90, 701; Dr. Janes's letters on, 680, 690-91, 715-16, 716; reaction to Père Hyacinthe in, 694, 695; Roman Catholic power in, 707
- Free Religious Association, 187, 289, 467
- French, Cara (Mrs. Clinton F.), 433, 434-35, 444-45, 446, 550, 562-63
- French, Clinton F., 382-83
- "French Critic on the Vedanta Movement, A" (editorial in *Prabuddha Bharata*), 706
- Fritz, Thaddeus S. (religious teacher in Los Angeles), 184
- Funke, Mrs. Charles (Mary), 62-63, 68, 69, 70-71, 96, 672, 673
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 583
- Ganga (Ganges River), 5, 16-17, 20-21
- "Ganges Cone," 21-22
- Ganguli, Manmatha Nath, 321
- Gayatri, 175, 386, 405
- Geddes, Patrick, 657-59, 661, 680-81, 695, 696, 697
- George, Henry, 464, 474
- Germany, 741-42, 744
- Gibraltar, Strait of, 47
- Gita (Bhagavad Gita): as allegory, 570; historicity of, 567-68, 570, 571-72; needed by India and the West, 589; part of *Mahabharata*, 708; quoted by SV, 18, 61, 411, 461, 577, 584, 586, 587, 593, 597, 598; SV's esteem for, 407, 547, 566, 573-74; universality of, 574; and the Upanishads, 566, 572-73, 574, 579, 586, 626, 636, 639
- SV speaks on: at Alambazar Math, 567-86 *passim*; in "Work without Motive" at Ramakrishna Mission, 566, 567, 568, 580, 581; in "The Sages of India" at Madras, 566, 568, 574, 575-76, 578; in "Reply to the Maharaja of Khetri" in Madras, 568-69; in "Sri Krishna's Message to the World" in San Francisco, 590-91; before Vedanta Society of San Francisco, 565, 591-601; before Vedanta Society of New York, 647, 651-52, 655
- teachings of: on three kinds of charity, 45-46; on Advaita Vedanta, 586-87, 588-89; on non-attachment, 580-81; on nonresistance as weakness, 583, 585, 595-96
- Gnana yoga. *See* Jnana yoga
- Golconda, S.S., 1-33 *passim*, 46-47
- Goodby (visitor at Ridgely), 100
- Goodwin, Josiah J., 52, 86, 128, 417; records SV's lectures, 51, 613, 643; death of, 644
- Goodyear, Walter, 129, 644, 674
- Gospel of Wealth, 468
- Gould, Fannie (California devotee), 525
- Greece, 748, 749
- Green Hotel, Pasadena, 236, 237-38, 244, 268
- Greenacre, Maine (Monsalvat School of Comparative Religion), 101, 303, 386, 388, 391, 684
- Greenstidel, Christine. *See* Christine, Sister
- Greenstidel family, 671-72
- Guernsey, Florence, 100
- Guernsey, Dr. Egbert, 125-26, 133, 134, 544
- Gupta, Mahendra Nath (pseud. M.), 14

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- Guru, 118, 388, 402, 403, 476, 523, 529, 597, 651-52
- Guru Maharaj. *See* Ramakrishna, Sri
- Gurudasa (Cornelius Heijblom, later Swami Atulananda), 336-37, 341, 521, 663; and SV, 134-35, 137; leads study group in Oakland, 336-37; and Shanti Ashrama, 663, 667-68
- Gysic, Max, 69-70
- Halboister, Marie, 53-54, 70
- Hale family, 100-101, 143-44, 208, 641
- Hale, George, 641
- Hale, Mrs. George, 101, 208, 438, 471, 641
- Hale, Harriet (Mrs. Clarence Woolley), 143, 144, 419, 641, 683, 684
- Hale, Mary, 100-101, 143-47, 208, 419, 438, 640, 641, 657
- Hale, Sam, 143
- Hammond, Eric, 8
- Hansbrough, Alice (Shanti), 160-62, 182-83, 212, 217, 228, 233, 235, 248-49, 335, 424, 425, 425-26, 429-30, 432, 436, 457-58, 481, 521, 559, 601; tells reminiscences of SV to Swami Ashokananda, 162-63; in South Pasadena, 212-35 *passim*; is called "Madam Moses," 233, 421; with SV in Pasadena, 238, 239, 241-42, 248; helps start Vedanta societies, 254-55, 256, 492, 496-97, 498; and SV's San Francisco lectures, 276, 280-82, 283, 316, 326-27; and Turk Street flat, 322-23, 326-27, 373, 376-77; SV meditates for, 377-78, 546; SV rebukes, 420-23; is praised by SV, 423, 501; attachment to daughter, 423-24, 533, 534; at Camp Taylor, 532-55 *passim*; at Alameda Home of Truth, 501, 502-3, 516-17, 520, 523-24; last memory of SV, 558-59
- Haramohan Babu (Mitra), 14
- Hatha yoga, 447-48
- Hearst, Phoebe Apperson, 314, 347-48
- Heijblom, Cornelius, *See* Gurudasa
- Helmer, Dr. (osteopath at Ridgely), 100, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 138, 139
- Hiller, Dr. Albert D., 433-36, 559
- Hindu Temple, San Francisco, 382
- Hinduism, 159-60, 292, 301-5
- Hinduism and Mohammedanism in America*, 301
- History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* (Gambhirananda), 42, 500 n
- Home for Widows and Girls, 10-11
- Home of Truth, 184, 279, 327, 519; Alameda, 501-3, 514-48 *passim*; California Street, San Francisco, 339, 443, 489-91, 554; Los Angeles, 189, 190-98; Pine Street, San Francisco, 276, 279, 282, 322, 489; members of at Shanti Ashrama, 667
- Hooghly River, 1, 17
- Howe, Miss (Chicago friend), 144
- Hudson River, 96
- Humanitarianism, 468-69, 470
- Huntington, Mrs. Collis Porter (Arabella), 436, 530, 659-60
- Hyde, Mrs. Herbert E. (Louise Baker), 145
- Hyacinthe, Père (Charles Loyson), 688, 693-95, 740-41, 747; 749
- Imitation of Christ, The*, 547
- In His Steps: What Would Christ Do?* (Sheldon), 467
- India, 3, 8, 49, 52, 226; the English and, 74, 226, 360, 363-64, 474, 753; history of, 157, 159-60, 200-201; ideals of, 21, 29, 240-42, 340-41; Nivedita and, 9, 35-36, 711, 723, 724-26; SV returns to, 751-58; women of, 239-40, 247-48. *See also* Vivekananda, Swami, and India
- Industrial Revolution, effects of, 464-65

INDEX

Ingersoll, Anna J., "The Swamis in America," 124

Initiation, 398, 402, 415-19

Inspired Talks, 62, 612, 656

International Association for the Advancement of Science, Art and Education, Paris Exposition, 695

Irving, Camp. *See* Camp Taylor

Ishta, 398, 401, 402, 403

Jackson, Mrs. James (hostess in Paris), 693, 695

James, William, 685, 696, 697-98, 698-99

Janes, Dr. Lewis G., 140, 419, 684, 698; and H. Muller, 64; defends SV in *Outlook*, 302-3; and Herbert Spencer, 467, 698; on Paris, 679-80, 682, 690-91; and Mrs. Bull, 696-97, 715-16; at "Congress of cranks," 696, 697-98; death of, 708

Jnana yoga, 117, 266, 267-68, 391, 393, 568-69, 573-74, 612, 614; and the Gita, 569, 586-87; and karma yoga, 579-80, 582, 588-89; and raja yoga, 393, 628. *See also* Vivekananda, Swami, teachings: Advaita Vedanta

Jnana Yoga, 51, 613, 626

Jonson, Mrs. Ashton. *See* Ashton-Jonson, Mrs.

Juhl, Louis Martin, 458-59, 531

Kali, 116, 588, 639; Bengali poem on by SV, 45. *See also* Divine Mother *Kali the Mother* (Nivedita), 119

Karma, law of, 80, 85, 329, 408

Karma yoga, 198, 199, 266, 371-72, 579-83, 591, 612, 628; and Advaita Vedanta, 579-80, 588-89; work as service or worship, 469, 472-73, 489, 589-90

Karma Yoga, 161, 199, 558, 613, 677

Karma yogi, 580-81, 585

Kashmir, 3

Kashmir, Maharajah of, 79

Khetri, Raja of (Ajit Singh), 54, 65, 79, 320, 482-85

Kidi (Singaravelu Mudaliar), 24

Kripananda, Swami (Leon Landsberg), 126-29, 130-33, 416, 634, 644, 671

Krishna, Sri: and Divine Love, 569, 587-88; greatness of, 575-76, 593; historicity of, 569-70; and jnana, 568-69, 586-87, 592-93; teachings not practiced in India, 577-78

Kshatriyas, 568-69, 593

Kubel, Miss de (visitor at Ridgely), 100

Kumbhaka, 397, 398

Kurukshetra, War, 567, 570-71, 583

Kundalini, 385, 386, 396-401 *passim*, 652, 676

Landsberg, Leon. *See* Kripananda, Swami

Late and Soon (Leggett), 684, 752

Le Conte, Joseph (professor at University of California), 314

Leggett, Mrs. Frances, 99, 118, 119, 681, 683, 684, 699

Leggett, Francis H. (Frank): and Ridgely, 97-98; takes care of SV's money, 314-15, 491; resigns as president of New York Vedanta Society, 643; stops contributing to missionaries, 686-87; at Paris Exposition, 691, 695

Leggett, Mrs. Francis H. (Besse [Betty] MacLeod Sturges): at Ridgely, 103, 109, 110, 113, 115; in southern California, 174, 175, 180, 215, 217-18, 226; and Mrs. Melton, 176, 687-88; and subscriptions for SV, 207-8, 209; helps Nivedita's fund-raising, 656-57, 662; in Paris, 678, 681; SV's congress-of-cranks letter to, 696-700

Leggett, Mr. and Mrs. Francis H., 96, 89-90, 419, 739-40; wedding of, 97,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- 98, 679, 738-39; at Ridgely, 70, 98, 99, 115; dispute with Swami Abhedananda, 494, 527, 643; in Paris, 6 place des Etats-Unis, 657, 680, 682, 683, 687, 688, 699; in Germany, 696, 706, 708
- Life of Emma Thursby, The* (Gipson), 695
- Lister, Mr. and Mrs., 665-66
- "Little Cottage" ("Swamiji's Cottage"), 97, 98-99, 102
- Lloyd (member of Southern California Academy of Sciences), 168
- Locke, Josephine (Chicago friend), 144
- Logan, Dr. Milburn H., 496, 498, 555-64, 591, 603, 666
- Lokamata Nivedita* (Basu), 120
- London: SV in, 2, 7, 47-71, 612; Vedanta work in, 2-3, 48-52, 53-54, 59-61, 64-68
- Los Angeles, 148-49, 172; Blanchard Hall, 156; Home of Truth, 184, 185-86, 189-90; Payne's Hall, 198; Southern California Academy of Sciences, 151, 164; Unity Church, 163; Vedanta Society in, 218, 255, 496
- Lotuses (psychic centers), 399
- Lowe, Mount, 214-16
- Loyson, M. and Mme Charles, 694, 695, 740, 742, 747, 748, 749. *See also* Hyacinthe, Père
- "Lymes, The," 63
- Lyon, Mr. and Mrs. John B., 144
- Lytle, Mrs. Charles (daughter of Dr. Jance), 680
- McClary, Miss (stenographer in Los Angeles), 186
- McKindley sisters (Isabelle and Harriet), 100, 101-2, 106, 419
- MacLeod, Josephine (Yum, Tantine), 3, 4-5, 56, 57, 59-60, 92, 94-95, 96, 102, 107, 175-77, 233-34, 281-82, 417-18, 438, 527, 528, 643, 676, 721; generosity of, 46, 209; at Ridgely, 77, 99-113; praised by SV, 89-90, 113, 174, 529; in southern California, 113, 150, 151, 171-72, 174, 175, 214-16, 217-18, 221, 223, 226, 252; in France, 680, 696, 699, 708, 710, 726-27, 727-28; on European tour, 739, 742-43, 748, 749; in Egypt, 735, 749, 750, 752, 754
- MacLeod, Taylor, 112-13, 140
- Madras and Madrasis, 22-25, 79, 154, 578-79, 745, 756
- Mahabharata*, 567-68, 571, 573
- Mahatma, 390
- Mahavira, 588
- Mahendranath. *See* Datta, Mahendranath
- "Man Whose Yoke was not Easy, The" (Harte), 125-26
- Mantra, 398, 418-19, 424-25
- Marchand (French teacher, Ridgely), 100
- Margesson, Lady Isabel, 50, 50-51
- Master as I Saw Him, The* (Nivedita), 34-36, 92-93
- Math. *See* Ramakrishna Math, Belur Maxim, Sir Hiram, 685-86, 744, 747
- Maya, 5, 70, 240, 329, 421, 619
- Mayavati (Advaita Ashrama), 494, 639
- Mead family, 160-62, 218-24, 234-35, 256, 419
- Mead, Helen, 161, 182-83, 214, 222, 234, 234-35, 665
- Mead, Jesse, 219, 220, 221, 256
- Mediterranean Sea, 47
- Melton, Mrs. (magnetic healer), 176-77, 433-34, 687-88, 698, 699
- Memoirs* ("Memoirs of European Travel," *Parivrajak*), 17, 18, 33, 747-48
- Memories of India and Indians* (Devamata), 674
- Militz, Annie Rix (Mrs. Paul), 279, 339
- Militz, Paul, 295, 349

INDEX

- Miller, Dr., 435-36, 559
- Mills, Benjamin Fay, 279, 288, 289-90, 294, 307, 467, 505; and Congress of Religions, 280-81, 287; and SV, 288-89, 294, 301, 302, 314, 316, 336
- Mills, Mrs. Benjamin Fay, 330, 466
- Mirabai, 389
- Missionaries, 38, 242, 686-87; Bogesh, 31-33; Calkins, 755-56; denigration of India by, 247-48, 260, 331-32, 609; Maxim and, 685-86; questionnaire of, 301-2, 507
- Mitra, Haripada and Indumati, 573
- Mizener, Miss (secretary of Vedanta Society of San Francisco), 497, 498, 564
- Mohammed and Mohammedanism, 251, 367, 369-70, 723
- Mombassa, S.S., 724
- Monasticism, 10, 217, 403-4, 576, 577; and Buddhism, 250-51, 576, 577; initiation into, 8, 62, 128, 337, 416-17, 644, 663; SV's new ideal of, 2, 38-39, 247. *See also* Sannyasa
- Monroe, Harriet, 110
- Mont-Saint-Michele, 726, 728
- Moore, Mrs. (member of Vedanta Society of San Francisco), 497
- Monsoon on Arabian Sea, 29-30
- Montclair, New Jersey, 120, 142-43
- Montgomery, Lillian, 653
- Muller (Müller), Henrietta, 56, 81, 82, 88, 92, 711; helps SV's work, 50-51, 65, 79; turns against SV, 58-59, 64-65, 78
- "My Friend from India," 178-80
- "My Master," 613
- Nanjunda Rao, Dr., 24
- Naples, 47
- Napoleon, 692, 743
- Narada-Bhakti-Sutra, 50
- Narasimhachary (Rao Bahadur R.), 24
- Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods* (Dickinson), 536-37
- National Geographic*, 22
- "Natives," 6, 20, 23, 34, 74
- Neilson, Charles P., 432-33, 498, 499, 514, 526, 564, 565
- New England Woman's Club, 187
- "New Gospel." *See* Vivekananda, Swami, teachings of
- New Thought, 184, 282, 439, 452, 543
- "New York Letter" ("American Brahmacharini"), 108
- New York (city), SV in, 2, 71, 123-29, 133-39, 577, 643-56, 673-77
- New York Vedanta Society. *See* Vedanta Society, New York
- Newcastle, Duke of, 709
- Newspaper articles: Alameda, *Daily Argus*, 507-8, 509-11; *Daily Encinal*, 506-7, 509-10
- Brooklyn, *Daily Eagle*, 645
- India, *Indian Mirror*, 59, 300-301; *Indian Social Reformer*, 58-59
- Los Angeles, *Capital*, 152-55; *Evening Express*, 201-2; *Herald*, 155-56, 159-60, 163-64, 164-67, 188, 200-1, 244-45; *Times*, 159-60, 167-68, 203-4, 206, 239, 244
- New York, *Daily Tribune*, 645; *Herald*, 130-33, 614-15; unknown paper, interview with Sister Nivedita, 661-63; *World*, 687-88, 737-40
- Oakland, *Enquirer*, 290-92, 297-98, 304-7, 307-08, 330, 350; *Times*, 297; *Tribune*, 292-93, 298-300
- Pasadena, *Star*, 117, 216, 252
- Redlands, *Daily Facts*, 217
- San Francisco, *Chronicle*, 284-85, 350-53, 355-61; *Examiner*, 284, 362-64, 364
- Newton, Mrs. Jacob C. (hostess in South Pasadena), 126, 213
- Nikhilananda, Swami, 99, 517, 641
- Nirbhayananda, Swami, 24
- Nishkama karma, 580-81
- Nivedita Girls' School, 624, 661-62; is started in Baghbazar, 8-11, 79; Nivedita seeks funds for in the

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- West, 644, 647-48, 656-57, 660-61
- Nivedita, Sister (Margaret [Margot] Elizabeth Noble): in London as Margaret Noble, 6, 7, 50, 673;
- in India: travels with SV, 3, 4-5, 8, 56, 261; urges SV to go to the West, 4, 5; secures berths on S.S. *Golconda*, 6; SV asks her to earn money by lecturing in the West, 7, 9-11; takes vows of brahmacharya, 8, 417; is trained for service to India, 8, 9, 35-36; starts school in Bagh**h**azar, 8-11; is given farewell address at the Math, 13
 - appearance and characteristics of, 7, 8, 662-63
 - and SV: is praised by, 8; understanding of, 72-74, 76, 145-46, 182, 655, 726, 730-31, 733; fulfills hopes of, 726
 - on the *Golconda*, 11, 16, 19-20, 21, 36, 45-46, 47; at Madras, 23-24; "At the Feet of the Motherland," 26-27; in Colombo, 29; and children, 32; *The Master as I Saw Him*, 34-36
 - at Wimbledon with family, 63; her mother and SV, 64, 72; imposes Hindu ways on, 68-69; remains for sister's wedding, 70; and E. T. Sturdy, 71-77, 92-93
 - is disillusioned about Western enthusiasm for India, 74-75, 103, 656-57
 - at Ridgely, 103; decides on nun's habit, 104; and SV, 114-15, 116-17, 117; makes retreat, 119-20; writes *Kali the Mother*, 119; with Mrs. Bull receives gerua, 120-22
 - SV writes poems for, 105, 230-31, 721
 - and the Divine Mother (Kali), 119, 697, 722, 723, 724
 - in Chicago, 110; speaks at Hull House, 144; and Mary ("Aunt Mary") Hale, 144, 145, 657
 - seeks American support for girls' school: at first successful, 147; gift of Mrs. Huntington, 436, 659-60; gains no substantial support from lecturing, 644, 647-48, 656-57; help of Mrs. Leggett, 656-57; forms Ramakrishna Guild of Help in America, 657, 660, 662
 - and *Prabuddha Bharata*: receives transcripts of SV's Los Angeles lectures for, 186-87; SV sends stories for, 230; interviews SV for in India, 624
 - in New York, 644, 674; gives talks to Vedanta Society, 647; reports on SV's lectures and classes, 585, 648-49, 651-52; is interviewed by newspapers, 661-63
 - and Patrick Geddes, 657-59, 661; works for in Paris, 711-12
 - at the "congress of cranks," 696, 697
 - in Brittany with Mrs. Bull, 699-700, 717; temporary estrangement from SV, 710-14, 721, 722; SV's farewell blessing, 722-23
 - and India: works for in England 722, 724; returns to at request of Sri Sarada Devi, 724; is involved in Indian politics, 723-26; resigns from the Ramakrishna Order, 725; regrets not being able to work more for Indian women, 725-26
- Niyama, 387, 404
- Noble, Gerald, 315, 679-80, 700, 710
- Noble, Margaret Elizabeth. *See* Nivedita, Sister
- Noble, Mary, 58, 63, 68, 70
- Noble, Richmond, 63, 68-69
- Noble, Mrs. Samuel Richmond, 58, 63, 64, 72
- North Pacific Coast Railroad*, 535, 536-37, 544, 554, 555
- N.W.P. (North-West Frontier Province), 56
- Numidian*, S.S., 70-71, 94, 95-96

INDEX

- Oakland, 285-87, 336; clergy of, 289-90, 304; SV pleased with reception in, 310; and the Vedanta movement, 336-37. *See also* Unitarian Church, First
- Ojas, 396
- Old Catholic church, 694
- Olea. *See* Vaughan, Olea
- Om, 394-95, 398, 404, 415, 418, 530
- "One Circle More," 115-16
- Orchard, Gertrude, 41
- Orient Express*, 737, 741-42, 745-46
- Outlook*, Dr. Janes's letters to, 302-3
- Overland Limited*, 601, 640
- Pacific Vedantin*, 499-500; letter of tribute to SV in, 601-3
- Palmer, Mrs. Potter, 684
- Panini *Ashtadhyayi*, 574
- Paper Mill Creek, 537, 545, 552
- Paradise Lost*, 599
- Paris: International Exposition, 10, 100, 315, 606, 657, 659, 726, 727, 736-37; Congress of History of Religions at, 567-68, 706-8; Henry Adams and, 690
- in 1900: artists and thinkers in, 688-89; Dr. Janes's accounts of, 680, 690-91; Leggett's house in, 681-83, 696-700, 708-9
- SV in: 678-79, 680-81, 691-93; and Père Hyacinthe, 693-95; gives talk at the Exposition, 696-97; writes to Mrs. Leggett of "congress of cranks," 696-99; with Jules Bois, 700-4, 706; and Nivedita, 710, 711-12
- Parivrajak* ("Memoirs of European Travel"), 17-18, 33, 747-48
- Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893, 1, 151, 152, 155, 187, 236, 237, 298, 300, 306, 522, 602; compared to Paris Congress of the History of Religions, 706-7
- SV at: first speech, 171, 547; paper on Hinduism, 292; and B. F. Mills, 288; and Hiram Maxim, 685-86; and Jules Bois, 702
- paper on the Social Gospel at, 466
- Parker, Dr. Herschell C., 643, 674
- Parkhurst, Charles H., 467
- Partington, Blanche: interviews SV, 355-61; writes to *Prabuddha Bharata*, 603-5; writes to *Brahmavadin*, 605-6
- Pasadena, 235-36; Hotel Green, 236, 237-38, 244; Shakespeare Club, 236-51; SV and, 236-56, 268-69; Universalist Church, 245, 249, 252; Throop Polytechnical Institute, 252-53; Vedanta society in, 254-56, 492, 496, 637
- Patanjali, 381, 399, 614
- Pavitrana, Swami, 653
- Peabody, Francis Greenwood, 466
- "Peace," 105-6
- Peake, Mrs. (Chicago friend), 144
- Perros-Guirec, 699, 715, 716-17, 722, 726
- Perry, Mrs. George H., 503, 504, 505-6, 525
- Petersen, Carl F., 603
- Petersen, Mrs. Carl F., 546
- Phillips, Mary, 644, 674
- Philosophy, Western, 616
- Pingree, William, 520-21, 523
- Plague, 6, 23-24, 46, 47, 474
- Plumb, Dr. (first president of Vedanta Society of San Francisco), 496, 497, 499, 601
- Port Said, 47, 61
- Prabhavananda, Swami, 257
- Prachya O Paschatya* ("The East and the West"), 18, 250, 678
- Pranava, 415
- Pranayama, 190, 195, 387, 405; in "Pranayama," 400, 410; in *Raja Yoga*, 400, 401; in *Six Lessons on Raja Yoga*, 394-95, 396, 398, 399, 400-401
- Pratyahara, 387, 397
- Premananda, Swami (Baburam), 39, 670, 720, 732
- Princes' Hall, London, 50

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Progress and Poverty (George), 464-65

Prophets of the New India (Rolland),
688, 707

Psychic powers, 398

Raja yoga, 612, 614; difficulty of,
205-6, 384, 401-2; Greenacre notes
on, 385-91; and jnana yoga, 393,
628

—lectures and classes on: in Los
Angeles, 195, 205, 264-66; in
Alameda, 504-6, 514-16; in San
Francisco, 373, 375-77, 379, 380-84,
402-7, 441, 446-48, 461-64; others
cited in *Complete Works*, 383-85

—techniques taught: in *Six Lessons on
Raja Yoga*, 392-402, 399-404; in
Raja Yoga, 383, 399, 400, 401, 404
Raja Yoga, 14, 60, 161, 320, 613, 614,
714-15

Rama (Ramachandra), 483, 576, 588

Rama Bai, 10

Ramakrishna Guild of Help in
America, 657, 660, 662

Ramakrishna Math, Alambazar, 567-
86 *passim*

Ramakrishna Math and Mission:
organized by SV, 2; resignation of
Nivedita from, 725; responsibility
for given by SV to gurubhais, 713,
718, 731, 732; seal of, 674-76;
SV remains leader of to end, 734

Ramakrishna Math, Belur, 13, 14, 41,
64, 77, 142; contributions to: by
Mrs. Bull, 79, 141, 719; from Cali-
fornia Vedanta societies, 255, 256;
by English and Indian friends, 79;
sent by SV, 65-66, 209, 482

—officers of, 210, 718, 720; Swami
Saradananda, secretary-treasurer,
39; Swami Brahmananda in com-
mand of in SV's absence, 39, 66-67;
Swami Brahmananda becomes
second president of, 732

—problems of: deed of trust, 142, 210,
211, 717, 718-20, 721, 732; lawsuit

over taxation, 42, 142, 319; Indian
politics, 725

—SV at: entertains Jules Bois, 704-5;
instructs members, 11-12, 14-15,
586, 631-32; last days, 734-35

Ramakrishna Mission, 2, 44, 261; SV
lectures to on "Work without
Motive," 566-81 *passim*
Ramakrishna Monastery, Bangalore,
77

Ramakrishna Order, 17, 77, 617-18,
622-23, 723, 725

Ramakrishna School for Girls, 661.

See also Nivedita Girls' School

Ramakrishna, Sri, 44, 191, 192, 193,
247, 402, 523, 525, 719; and the
Divine Mother, 121, 519; on ini-
tiation, 48; on SV, 13, 273; Swami
Premananda on, 39

—SV and: becoming like, 211, 432;
to be reborn with, 411-12, 472;
devotion to, 115, 406, 420, 477;
lectures on in "My Master," 613;
spreads message of, 476-77, 479,
579, 610, 624-25, 627, 720; and
new era, 578, 690; has paid debt to,
720

Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Cal-
cutta, 102, 557

Ramakrishnananda, Swami, 24, 39,
67, 669, 720

Ramayana, 26-27

Ramnad, Maharajah of, 154

Rankin, Molly (housekeeper in Ala-
meda Home of Truth), 517, 518

Reading, England, 88

Reclus, Elisée, *The Earth and its In-
habitants*, 177-78

Recordings of SV's voice in Chicago,
144-45

Red Sea, 32, 45

Redlands, 216-18

"Reply to the Madras Address," 589

"Reply to the Maharaja of Khetri,"
568-69

Retreats in America, 636, 663, 664,
671; SV offered land for retreat in

INDEX

- California in 1896, 664. *See also*
 Shanti Ashrama: Vedanta Retreat,
 Olema
- Rhodelhamel, Frank: on SV's lectures,
 334, 335, 375, 441-42, 448, 452,
 455, 456-57, 490; and Gurudasa's
 study group, 336; interviews with
 SV, 374, 407-8; on SV's classes,
 375-76, 377, 380-81, 592, 595; de-
 scribes SV, 378, 405-6, 518-19;
 becomes disciple of Swami Turiya-
 nanda, 415; visits SV in Alameda,
 516; and SV's touch, 522
- Rhodelhamel, Mrs. Frank, 336, 375
- Richelieu, Duke of, 688
- Ridgely, 70, 96-102, 108, 109
- Rodin, Auguste, 688
- Roethlisberger, Dora, 417-18
- Roman Catholics: and Père Hyacinthe, 693-94; at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, 707; oppose religious congress in Paris, 707
- Roorbach, Eloise (Mrs. George), 345, 346, 460; on SV's chanting, 449-50; and SV at Alameda Home of Truth, 502, 503, 519-20
- and Camp Taylor, 531, 546; reminiscences of, 538-53 *passim*; revisits, 539
- Roorbach, George, 535
- Roorbach, Mr. and Mrs. George, 502, 503, 517, 523-24
- Rubbatino*, S.S., 755-56
- Sadananda, Swami, 5
- "Sages of India, The," 569-70, 573, 578, 587-88
- Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome, 692
- Samadhi, 387
- Samuel P. Taylor State Park, 531, 541. *See also* Camp Taylor
- San Antone (Antonio) Valley, 666, 667, 670. *See also* Shanti Ashrama
- San Francisco, 275, 276-79, 324, 459, 480, 501-2; earthquake and fire, 283, 349, 362, 435, 509; transportation in, 276, 278, 322, 327, 349, 425, 459, 501
- SV in, 425-30, 432-33; California Street Home of Truth, 322, 490-91; Dr. Logan's offices, 496; Dr. Logan's Oak Street house, 496, 555; Golden Gate Hall, 282-83; Pine Street Home of Truth, 276, 279, 322; Red Men's Building, 439-40, 441, 492; Turk Street flat, 323-27; Union Square Hall, 439; Dr. Hiller's home, 433-36; response to, 313-17, 444, 448-49, 457-58, 491
- inauguration of Vedanta Society in, 440, 494-99
- Sankhya Philosophy, 263, 597, 613, 616
- Sannyasa, 71, 75, 81-84, 90-91; and regeneration of India, 2, 617-18; SV and, 274, 321, 412, 416-17, 527, 702, 732. *See also* Monastic initiation; Monasticism; Sannyasins
- "Sannyasa: Its Ideal and Practice," 14
- Sannyasins, 90, 321, 553, 556, 568, 579
- Sanskrit, 162, 358, 363-64, 449-50, 544-45; scholars, 708
- Sarada Devi, Sri (the Holy Mother), 10, 16, 662
- Saradananda, Swami (Sarat), 4, 14, 50, 61, 92, 139, 142, 211, 402, 718, 719, 725; and Mrs. Bull, 6, 11, 43-44, 67-68, 211; in America, 41, 42, 51, 303, 635, 642; becomes secretary-treasurer, 39; and the Math trust deed, 43, 210; and the Math accounts, 66, 67-68, 527; on SV's experiences, 512; letter of to Dr. Logan on Swami Turiyananda, 669-70; reports SV's financial problems solved, 731
- Satchidananda (Sachchidananda), Swami, 49, 512
- "Science and Philosophy of Religion, The," 613
- Scudder (Üsküdar), 747
- Seal of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, 500, 674-76

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- Sermon on the Mount, 577, 652
 Severance, Caroline Maria Seymour, 187-88
 Sevier, Charlotte (Mrs. James Henry), 4, 58-59, 181, 736; edits SV's lectures, 250, 262; gives SV money for private expenses, 79, 556
 Sevier, Captain James Henry, 65, 752, 753
 —and Mrs. Sevier: accompany SV in Europe, 51; go to India with SV, 52; are disciples of SV, 417; SV on, 51, 52, 65, 74, 89, 752-53; in Mayavati, 493-94, 556, 753
 Sex force, 396
 Shakespeare Club, Pasadena, 236-251 *passim*
 Shanti Ashrama, 256, 337, 355, 375, 521, 525, 647: homestead given to SV by Minnie C. Boock, 663, 664; advantages and disadvantages of site, 663, 667; SV tells Mrs. Hansbrough of, 664-65
 —Swami Turiyananda establishes retreat of, 665-68, 670-71
 Shark-fishing, 46-47
 Sharma, Beni Shanker, *Swami Vivekananda—A Forgotten Chapter of His Life*, 482, 484
 Shasta, Mount, 435, 559
 Sheldon, Charles M., 467-68; *In His Steps: What Would Christ Do?*, 467
 Shiva (Siva), 21, 29, 114
 Shivananda, Swami, 49
 Shuddhananda, Swami, 3, 757
 Shudras, 575
 Sinha, Priya Nath, 415
 Sister Nivedita (Atmaprana), 69, 711, 712, 714
 Sita, 27
 Smith, Annie, tells of effect of SV's work in California, 254
 Smith, Mrs. R. (visitor at Ridgely), 122
 Social evolution, 465
 Social Gospel, 465, 466-67, 590
 Socialized Christianity, 465
 "Song of the Sannyasin, The," 234, 412
 South Pasadena, 218, 220; SV stays in Meads' house, 218-35; picnic classes in, 226-28, 522, 548
 Southern California Academy of Sciences, 151, 163, 168
 Souter, Emmeline (London friend), 65, 69-70, 79, 81, 82
 Spencer, Herbert, 167, 465, 698, 708
 Spencer, Miss (hostess in Los Angeles), 149-50
Spiritual Talks, 39
 Stanton, Dr. Katie (New York Vedantin), 674
 Starr, Miss (Chicago friend of Nivedita's), 145-46
Statesman (India), publishes Miss Muller's letter, 59
 Steel, Mrs. Edward T. (Dr. Janes's daughter), 680
 Steele, Mrs. C. W. (San Francisco friend), 490
 Stenographers for SV's lectures, 186 245-46; J. J. Goodwin, 51, 128, 613; Ida Ansell, 338, 339-40
 Stetson, Judge John W. (member of First Unitarian Church), 306-7
 Stickney Memorial Building, Pasadena, 243
 Stimson (hosts in Los Angeles), 185, 213
 Stockham, Cora (Chicago friend), 144
 Stockton, California, 513
 Stone Ridge, New York, 97, 100, 119
 Street, Dr., New York disciple given vows of sannyasa, 417
 Strickny, Miss (Los Angeles friend), 256
 Stumm, Maud, 94, 96, 100, 109-11, 118-19
 Sturdy, Edward T., 48-49, 59, 70; in charge of London work, 5, 53, 54; fails to meet SV on arrival in England, 48, 63; and marriage, 49, 54, 55, 57
 —and SV: early devotion for, 52;

INDEX

- turns against, 54; is asked to help in America, 56-57, 61; worries about London visit of, 58, 60-61, 61-62; final correspondence between, 77-92
- and Nivedita, 59, 74, 81; correspondence about SV with, 71-77
- Sturdy, Lucie (Mrs. Edward T.), 49, 54, 57, 88, 91, 92
- Sturges, Alberta: at Ridgely, 99, 102, 106, 118; asks SV about his broken-off lecture, 136; in Paris with SV, 683, 688, 689, 691, 708-10; SV sends postcard to from Constantinople, 747
- Sturges, Besse MacLeod. *See* Leggett, *Mrs. Francis H.
- Sturges, Hollister, 100, 106, 118
- Suez: Canal, 33; port of, 46-47
- Sumner, William Graham, 465, 466
- Sutta-Nipata*, 404
- Swami Vivekananda - A Forgotten Chapter of His Life*, (Sharma), 482-85
- Swami Vivekananda and His Guru* (Christian Literature Society), 301-2
- Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Burke), 609, 611
- Swami Vivekananda Memorial Volume*, "Buddhistic India," 249
- Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet* (Datta), 18
- Tagore, Maharajah Sir Jatindra Mohan, 14
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 18
- Tantric yoga, 401
- Theosophy and Vedanta, 169, 606, 617, 634
- Thomas à Kempis and *The Imitation of Christ*, 547
- Thought and Work Club, Salem, Massachusetts, 187
- "Thoughts on the Gita," 583, 591
- Thousand Island Park: Mary Funke and Christine Greenstidel at, 62-63; SV gives monastic vows at, 62, 128, 416-17, 634, 644
- SV's teachings at: in *Inspired Talks*, from Miss Waldo's notes, 612, 656; on duty, 591; on the Gita, 570, 573, 575, 582
- Throop Polytechnic Institute and Manual Training School, 252-53
- Thursby, Emma, 42, 348, 644; notes of SV's classes, 385-91; in France, 684, 693, 695, 699, 715, 716, 727
- Tilbury, England, 47, 48, 62
- "To My Own Soul," 117
- Tootle and Sister Nivedita, 32
- Transcendentalism, 617
- Trigunatita, Swami (Sarada), 14, 382, 383; produces *Udbodhan*, 39; disciples of, 415; and Vedanta Society of San Francisco, 500, 670; with Dr. Logan, 563
- Turiyananda, Swami (Haribhai), 4, 5, 39, 70, 96, 256, 375, 642, 644, 671; is persuaded by SV to lecture in public, 6-7, 39; accompanies SV to West, 6, 14, 16, 17, 21, 30, 31; and Western clothes, 60, 61, 670; spirituality of, 72, 601; at Ridgely, 98-99, 102; works at Montclair and New York, 120, 142-43, 646; gives lecture at Cambridge Conference, 140; and the Meads, 221, 234-35 666; disciples of, 234-35, 415; in charge of California work, 253, 255, 665; in southern California, 255, 665-66; and Shanti Ashrama, 355, 647, 665-68; and Vedanta Society of San Francisco, 499, 601, 665, 666, 668; stays with Dr. Logan, 563; on the effect of SV's lecturing, 652-53; is recalled to India because of illness, 668-70; learns at Rangoon of SV's death, 670; with SV at Coney Island, 674; tells of SV at Paris Exposition, 692
- Turk Street flat, 319, 323-27, 373-83, 400-10, 420. *See also* San Francisco
- Twentieth Century Club, Boston, 467

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

Udbodhan: J. MacLeod gives money for, 209; *Six Lessons on Raja Yoga* found in office of, 381; Swami Trigunatita and, 39; SV writes of travels for, 17-18, 33

Union League Club, New York: Dr. E. Guernsey a founder of, 125; SV writes to Mary Hale from, 140

Unitarian Church, First, Oakland, 279, 281, 293-94, 335, 604; commemoration of SV's lectures in, 337; Congress of Religions at, 280-81, 287, 289, 295-300; and B. F. Mills, 287-88, 289; appreciation of SV by members of, 304-7; SV's lecture on Vedanta and Christianity in, 307-10; Woman's Alliance of helped by SV, 331

—Wendte Hall, 293, 312-13; first series of lectures in, 328-30; second series in, 330-35

Universalist Church, Pasadena, 245, 249, 252

Upanishads: Atman and Brahman in, 354; bhakti not developed in, 586; ideal of and Buddha, 576; commentators on, 574; development of spiritual ideas in, 572; Gita and, 566, 572-73, 574, 576, 579, 586, 626, 636, 639; *mahavakya* "That thou art" in, 626; Sri Ramakrishna the embodiment of, 579; SV thinks of using in ritual, 636; teaching of strength in, 566, 621, 622; withheld from masses, 474, 579

Usha, Brahmacharini (Pravrajika Anandaprana), 186

Vaishyas, 575

Van Haagen, Henry, New York printer of SV's works, 675

Vaudeville, 180-81

Vaughan, Olea, 106, 120; illness of, 77, 95, 103; at Ridgely, 99, 112, 115, 117-18

Vedanta and the West, 257

Vedanta Class. *See* Vedanta Society of San Francisco

Vedanta Philosophy, 300, 354, 372, 393, 407, 415, 438, 474, 512, 566, 582, 639; appeal of to West, 124, 301-3, 337, 507-8, 604, 606-7, 615, 616; basic to other religions, 303, 615-16, 632, 635, 636-37, 638; early influence of in West, 153, 573, 616-17, 704; Gita and, 572-73, 586-87; God of, 486-87; and love, 487-88, 580, 581-82; a religion in itself, 477-80, 638-40; strength the quintessence of, 372, 566, 621-22; three schools of, 574, 578-79, 615 '—and Swami Vivekananda: in first visit, 2, 51, 53, 263, 611, 612-13, 626-27; in India, 621-24; in second visit, 253-57, 604, 607, 627-28; lectures on, 155-60, 297-300, 311, 329, 452-56, 477-80, 579-80, 604, 612, 613; the prophet of, 124, 154, 372

"Vedanta Philosophy of India, The": introduction to (Everett), 507; published in 1896, 613

Vedanta Retreat, Olema, 541

Vedanta society in Gretz, France, Centre Védantique-Ramakrichna, 681

Vedanta Society of New York, 495, 633, 635, 637; Swami Abhedananda and, 123-24, 494, 527, 683, 637; Swami Saradananda and, 635

—first permanent headquarters, of, 123, 577; Nivedita gives talks in, 647; receptions for SV in, 133-35, 646; SV at, 123-43, 641-56, 663, 671, 673-77; SV's lectures and classes in, 134-36, 646-52, 655-56

Vedanta Society of San Francisco, 440, 492, 494, 637; Swami Turiyananda and, 499, 666, 668; publishes *Pacific Vedantin*, 499-500; Swami Trigunatita and, 500

—SV and: founds society in San Francisco, 492-94, 495, 500 n, 637;

INDEX

- attends meeting of, 564, 565; lectures on Gita to, 559, 565, 591-92; expects money to be sent to Math from, 494; sends gurubhais to take charge of, 601, 665, 670; obituary tribute to, 601-3
- first meetings of: inauguration, 494-99, 514; in Dr. Logan's office, 496, 498, 562, 564, 565; in Dr. Logan's house, 496, 555, 562-63, 565, 591-92
- becomes Vedanta Society of Northern California: opens branch center in Berkeley, 1939, 337; publishes
 - *The Voice of India*, 342, 343; develops retreat at Olema, 541
- Vedanta Society of Southern California, 218, 229, 257. *See also* Pasadena, Vedanta society in
- Vedantins, 637, 639
- Vedas, 2, 30, 109, 160, 295, 308, 354, 574-75, 592, 622, 623
- Verdier, Mme Paul, 136, 194, 751
- Vidyatmananda, Swami, 678, 679, 681, 693, 707, 728
- Vienna, 741, 742-43
- Vivekananda, Swami (Swamiji): first visit to the West (1893-96), 1-2, 141, 248, 263, 608-13; books published, 51, 612, 613; teachings, 245, 260, 328, 614-17; plans Indian work, 617-18
- second visit (1899-1900): purpose of, 1, 5-6, 141, 206, 209-10, 493, 626; reasons for going to California, 140-42, 319; message and mood compared to first visit, 618-32; new concept of form of Western Vedanta movement, 632-40
- and gurubhais: their unswerving love for, 26; response of to new monasticism, 38-39, 42, 44, 619; impatience with, 39, 44, 619, 717-18; is pleased with work of, 39-40, 527, 720-21; worries about health of, 41, 668-70; teaches to keep strict accounts, 67; love for, 169-71, 721; explains harsh treatment of, 170-71; is helped by in Western work, 6-7, 50, 51, 53, 90-91, 253, 635-36, 665, 670; work done by is Sri Ramakrishna's, 720; deeds Math to, 732. *See also* Abhedananda, Swami; Akhandananda, Swami; Brahmananda, Swami; Premananda, Swami; Ramakrishnananda, Swami; Saradananda, Swami; Trigunatita, Swami; Turiyananda, Swami
- mission of, 2, 40, 182, 189, 211-12, 257, 444; keynote of, 12-13, 15; lectures on, 246-48; defines, 578-79, 615, 624; "a message to the West," 611; and Goodwin's role in, 613; development of in second visit, 619-20; end of, 258, 273-74, 678, 718-20, 731-32. *See also* Vivekananda, Swami, teachings
- departure from India, 1, 5-6, 13-17
- travels in northern India, 3, 8, 56
- health: in India, 3-4, 5, 11, 40, 41, 45, 55; on voyage to England, 25, 43, 44, 64; knows he has diabetes, 41, 55; in England, 64, 65; at Ridgely, 103, 106; in New York, 138-39, 140; in southern California, 169, 170, 181-82, 183, 208, 209, 210, 211, 225; in northern California, 310, 319-20, 46-47, 437, 491, 534, 543, 550, 551, 556; in Detroit, 672-73; in France, 717; in Egypt, 754
- Western disciples of; number of, 415-18, 419-20; "all Brahmanas," 415; few given formal initiation, 415-17; "friends," 234-35, 416, 417-19; hopes to make teachers of, 634-35
- pictures of: at Belur Math, 14; at Ridgely, 102, 111-12; Chicago poster, 171-72; at Mt. Lowe, 215; in South Pasadena, 226-27, 522; in San Francisco, 357, 361-62, 445; in Alameda, 526
- dress of: 16, 28, 200, 412; turban,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- 111, 174, 183, 224; in Los Angeles, 182-83, 185; at the Meads', 221, 222, 224, 233; in San Francisco, 284, 374, 410, 425; at Camp Taylor, 532, 534
- writes of travels for *Udbodhan*: "Memoirs of European Travel", 17-18, 746; "The East and the West," 18, 678
- on voyage from Calcutta to England: the Ganga, 18-21; Bay of Bengal, 20-22; refused permit to land at Madras, 22-25; and Alasinga Perumal, 25-26; at Colombo, 27-29; on the Red Sea, 29-33; mood during, 36-45; at Suez, 46-47; in the Mediterranean, 47
- two years of suffering in India, 37, 45, 274-75, 438, 729
- predictions: imminence of his death, 37, 103, 484, 529, 625, 672-73; future of Vedanta work in California, 253-54; his being reborn, 411-12, 472; will be worshiped, 444; the man of the future, 487; his teachings are for the next 1500 years, 589; the future of civilization, 116, 234, 332, 589-90; his teachings will be accepted, 475; the power in his message of manliness, 586; coming war in Europe, 744; the English acceptance of India's religion, 757
- and food: meat, 38, 41, 68-69, 96, 226, 377-78, 575; fondness for ice cream, 109, 459-60; peanuts, 185; mulligatawny soup, 193-94; likes peas and grapes, 225; dislikes guavas, 358; onions, 379; refreshments after lectures in San Francisco, 432; at Homes of Truth, 490, 517, 518-19, 520, 535, 575; at Camp Taylor, 545, 549-50, 550-51; hot chilies 549-50, 746; khichuri, 758
- rebukes of, 39, 40, 44, 169-70, 233, 406-7; and Mrs. Hansbrough, 420, 422, 533; makes amends for, 140-41, 170, 422-23; for Americans, 474-75; sees good effect of in Belur, 527
- wants trained teachers to carry on the work, 40, 634, 635-36
- poems of: on Kali, 45; "Peace," 105-6; "One Circle More," 115-16; "To My Own Soul," 117; "Who Knows How Mother Plays," 230-31; quotes "Song of the Sannyasin," 234, 412; "A Benediction," 721
- in England, 47, 48, 62, 63; and E. T. Sturdy, 48-62, 77-92; sees failure of London work, 53-54; at Wimbledon, 63, 68-70; is depressed by various harassments, 64-66
- and his mother, Bhuvaneshwari Datta, 65, 210, 319, 320-22, 482-83, 556; goes on pilgrimage with, 734
- sails for New York on *Numidian*, 70-71, 94-96
- in New York, 71, 123-29, 133-39; , holds classes for Vedanta Society and gives talks to, 124, 134-37, 577, 646-47, 647-52, 655; and Swami Kripananda, 126-33; Vedanta Society receptions for, 134-35, 646; refrains from using power, 135-36, 407; stays with Dr. Guernsey for medical care, 138-39; hopes for quiet winter in Cambridge, 139; attitude toward dispute in Society, 527, 529; on return from California stays in Vedanta Society house, 643-46, 673-77
- at Ridgely, 70, 98, 127; accommodations at, 98-99, 102; is able to relax, 107, 108-12; starts book on India, 104, 108; helps Maud Stumm, 109, 118-19; informal talks of, 109-10, 114-17; takes drawing lessons, 110-11, 112; considers attending Dewey celebration in New York, 112; proposes classes in California when J. MacLeod goes, 113; anguish at defections, 117; helps Olea Vaughan, 117-18; gives gerua

INDEX

- to Mrs. Bull and Nivedita, 120-22
- on poetry, 71, 116, 333-34
- and smoking, 78, 88, 106, 181, 222, 374, 408; leaves pipe at Meads' house, 228-29; at Home of Truth, 502, 527-28, 520
- on his karma, 80, 85, 176, 408
- problems of with hostesses, 88-89, 213-14, 322, 436, 562-63
- French language: 108, 420, 683-84, 688, 701, 710; writes note and letter in, 728, 729, 732; gives up effort to lecture in, 736
- and Montclair, New Jersey, 142-43
- at Chicago, 143-44; makes recordings, 144-45; gives talk at Walton Place, 145; visits again briefly, 640-41
- wishes to retire, 141, 210, 211, 319-20, 457, 556-57
- and Emma Calvé, 146, 147, 684, 735, 737-40, 746; her memories of, 748-51, 751-52
- in Los Angeles: spends week at Miss Spencer's with Miss MacLeod, 149-50; is already known and appreciated in California, 151-55, 310, 314; speaks at Blanchard Hall, 155-60, 184, 199-202; at Unity Church (Southern California Academy of Sciences), 157, 163-69; at Home of Truth, 184-85, 190-93, 195-98; at at Payne's Hall, 198-99, 202-5; stays with Mrs. Blodgett, 172-78, 181, 207, 212; attends "My Friend from India" and vaudeville, 178-81; experiences upsurge of spirits, 181-82, 183; is given reception by Mrs. Severance, 187-88; cuts short series on "Applied Psychology," 205-6; has dinner with the Meads, 212-13; makes short visits to several homes, 213-14; is angered by promoter, 204-5; resigns himself to continue working, 211-12
- and cooking, 174, 177, 190, 193-94, 413; mulligatawny soup, 193-94; at the Meads', 231-32; at Turk St. flat, 411; at Alameda Home of Truth, 412, 413, 520; at Camp Taylor, 549-50; in Detroit, 673
- stays with the Meads, 182-84, 212-14, 221-34; and children, 222-23; hilltop classes, 226-28; reads own works to, 234; relationship with, 234-35, 423, 665
- on his lectures, 202, 367, 489, 675; "smashing truths," 625; "bomb-throwing," 441, 442, 443; is aware of effect of, 444, 450-51, 652-53; sees platform work ending, 457
- considers visit to San Francisco, 206, 279-81
- interest in industrial schools, 206, 207, 243; visits Throop Polytechnic Institute, 252-54
- wishes to return to India, 208-9, 211, 320
- and the trust deed of the Math. *See* Ramakrishna Math, Belur
- takes excursions: Mt. Lowe, 214-16; Redlands, 216-18
- in Pasadena: lectures at Hotel Green, 236, 237-38; at Shakespeare Club, 236, 237, 238-42, 244-45, 246-48, 249-51; gives talk at Echo Mountain House, 215; and missionary antagonists, 241-42; lectures at Universalist Church, 245, 246
- and organization of Vedanta societies in West: in southern California, 254-57, 637; in San Francisco, 492-93, 494-97; dislikes organizations, 632-33, 636, 637-38; in New York, 633, 635, 636-37; accepts need for in West, 637-38; monistic character of, 639-40
- enters final phase of life, 273-75, 438-39
- in San Francisco, 276, 322-27, 338, 355-64, 426-36; speaks at Golden Gate Hall, 282-85, 345-47; at Red Men's Building, Washington Hall, 373, 439-40, 441, 451, 461, 475,

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- 485, and Social Hall, 492; at Union Square Hall, 348-55, 365-72, 476-80; gives classes and interviews at Turk St. flat, 325-26, 327, 373-83, 405-7, 407-10, 420; attends ship-launching, 430-32; and Dr. Hiller, 433-36; takes brief trip out of, 435, 559; high spiritual state in, 437-39; and Vedanta Society of, 494-97, 557; stays with Dr. Logan, 555, 556, 559, 563; gives Gita lectures at Dr. Logan's house, 565, 591-601; promises to send Swami Turiyananda to, 253, 601; asks Swami Trigunatita to take Swami Turiyananda's place, 670
- distrusts American ministers, 281, 302
- in Oakland: speaks at Congress of Religions, First Unitarian Church, 280-81, 285, 290-300; gives second lecture in church, 304, 307-10; lectures in Wendte Hall, 312-13, 328-35; is pleased with reception, 310
- defenders of: Dr. Janes, 302-3; officials of Unitarian Church, 305-7
- speaks of dangers in United States cities to, 425-26, 522
- in Alameda, 481, 501; gives talks to Cheney Section, 504-6; lectures in Tucker's Hall, 506-7, 508-16; stays at Home of Truth, 501-30, 532-34; friends in, 525-26; exalted state in, 527-30, 619
- on Americans going to India, 493-94
- at Camp Taylor (Irving), 530-31, 534-36, 541-55; and American Indian boy, 545; and target shooting, 552; and Ida Ansell, 541, 542, 549-50, 554; and meditation, 542, 545-46; high states of, 548
- makes will, 543, 719
- and retreats, 636, 663, 664-65, 671; monument to at Olema Vedanta Retreat, 541
- at Detroit, 640, 647, 671-73
- death of, 655, 670, 735, 751, 752
- thinks of visiting Japan, 699, 736
- designs seal of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, 675-76
- sails for France on *Champagne*, 677, 678
- in Paris: and Gerald Nobel, 315, 679-80, 700, 710; at 6, place des Etats-Unis, 680-83, 684, 709; and Jules Bois, 683-84, 728-29; meets American friends, 684-85, 687, 688; meets artists and thinkers, 688-89, 709; praises Paris as cultural capital of West, 690, 744; and the Exposition, 280-81, 315, 693, 695-96, 736-37, 791-92; attends *l'Aiglon* and visits Louvre, 692; on Napoleon 692, 743; and Mrs. James Jackson, 693, 695; and Père Hyacinthe, 693-95; writes to Mrs. Leggett about "congress of cranks," 696-99; speaks at Congress of the History of Religions, 706, 707-8; resigns presidency of the Math and Mission, 713, 718, 731-35; thinks of giving lectures in English, 735-36
- moods in France, 692, 710, 712, 717-18, 719-20, 721, 728, 729-32
- in Brittany: guest of Mrs. Bull, 709-10, 714, 716-18, 726; letter to Swami Turiyananda from the "sea-coast of France," 717-18, 719-20; and Nivedita, 710, 714, 721-23, 724-25; second visit to, in October, 727-28; writes in French to Sister Christine, 728, 729, 732
- visits Mont-Saint-Michele, 726, 729
- accomplishments of, 729-30
- countries visited by, 735
- on the *Orient Express* tour, 737, 741-42, 745-46; in Vienna, 742-44; on Germany, 742; compares Balkans to India, 745; on the Hungarians and their religion, 745-46
- at Constantinople, 746-48; lectures at American College of Girls at Scutari, 747; gives private talks in, 747
- in Greece, 748, 749

INDEX

- in Egypt: Cairo, 748–50; Port Tewfick, 747, 755; El Giza, 755
- on S.S. *Rubbatino*, 755–56
- in India: at Bombay, 756–57; surprises monks at Belur, 757–58; goes on pilgrimage with mother, 734; leads quiet life, 1901 and 1902, 734–35
- Vivekananda, Swami, characteristics of: appearance, 134–35, 138, 162, 165, 175, 212, 295–96, 318, 356–57, 362, 374, 609; in San Francisco, 425, 448, 449; at Camp Taylor, 552, 554; in New York, 653
- general impressions of, 449–51, 609; C. Albers, 347; E. Allan, 310–11, 366; I. Ansell, 554; G. Applegarth, 312; R. Blodgett, 173–75; J. Bois, 704, 705–6; J. Bransby, 185, 191–93; E. Brown, 350; S. Fox, 295–96; Gurudasa, 134–35; A. Hansbrough, 161–62; L. Hyde, 145; Dr. Logan, 563–64; 601–3; L. Montgomery, 653–55; Nivedita, 648–49, 655, 730–31, 734; R. Noble, 69; B. Partington, 355–61, 604–5; R. Calkins, 755–56; F. Rhodehamel, 374, 449
- spiritual status of, 438, 665, 733; as prophet or Incarnation, 228, 229, 273–74, 311, 372, 418–19, 444, 451, 479, 512–13, 551, 563, 602, 603, 611, 619, 620–21; superconscious moods of, 3, 193, 194–95, 526–30; joyful and serene at all times, 44–45, 172–73; mind naturally meditative, 273–74; plunges monks at Belur into deep meditation, 734
- effect of presence of, 172–73, 450; on J. MacLeod, 194; on the Meads, 227–28, 229; power to lift minds, 377–78, 379, 405, 734; in lectures, 452, 456–57; is aware of effect of lectures, 444, 450–51, 652–53
- Vivekananda, Swami, and finances: London funds, 5, 60–61, 65, 79, 79–80, 89, 92
- and the Math, 65–68; contributions from West to, 65, 79, 141, 207–10, 255, 256, 348, 556, 719; gives Swami Brahmananda power of attorney for, 66–67; lawsuit against Belur municipality, 42, 142, 526, 527; need of funds for, 141–42, 208–9, 255, 256, 348, 556; is relieved of worry over, 208–9, 526, 731
- personal expenses of, 65–66, 79–80, 208–9, 482–85, 556; borrows from Math to buy house for mother, 141, 319, 320, 484, 556, 731; lawsuit against aunt, 65, 66, 209, 211, 731; and Raja of Khetri, 65, 79, 320, 482–85
- and Indian work, 74, 141, 493, 494
- money earned by, 66, 79, 314–15, 331, 481, 655–66, 731
- Vivekananda, Swami, and India: cause of downfall of, 250–51, 584; hopes for exchange between East and West, 255, 332–33; love for, 334–35; lectures on, 200–202, 238–39, 239–42, 259–62; mission to, 2, 11–13, 14–15, 37–38, 40–41, 617–18, 619, 624; need for strength in, 20, 37–38, 226, 574, 579, 583–84, 621–24, 625–26; study of, 261–62; triumphant reception in, 37, 42, 154–55, 291, 300–301, 357, 412
- the work for: obstac . . . to, 37–40, 43, 621; progress of, 6, 9, 729–30; role of Ramakrishna Order in, 617–18; Western contributions to, 74, 141, 493, 494; concern for, 618, 734
- Vivekananda, Swami, letters previously unpublished in whole or in part: to Swami Abhedananda, May 19(?) , 1900, 557, 558
- to Sara C. Bull, March 26, 1897 41–42; April 4, 1898, 55–56; Aug. 6, 1899, 65–66; Nov. 12, 1899, 138–39; Nov. 30, 1899, 146 47; Apr. , 1900, 482; April 12, 1900, 491, 493, 494, 502, 527–28; May 18, 1900, 556–57

VIVEKANANDA: SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

- to Mary Hale, June 23, 1900, 733
- to Alice Hansbrough, Summer of 1900, 235; June, 1900, 664–65; July 3, 1900, 666; Feb. 14, 1902, 668–69; June 3, 1901, 256
- to Isabelle McKindley, Aug. 31, 1899, 101
- to Besse Leggett, Sept. 3, 1900, 696
- to Josephine MacLeod, March 2, 1900, 314–15
- to Sister Nivedita, undated, 230
- to Alberta Sturges, Nov. 1, 1900, 747
- to Edward T. Sturdy, Sept. 14, 1899, 78–80
- Vivekananda, Swami, teachings of: in first and second visits, 199, 260, 581, 614–18, 628–29; the “New Gospel,” 15, 20, 107–8, 199, 257–73, 614–32
- on man: future of, 487, 582, 624; true nature of, 158–59, 160, 267, 271, 272, 284, 298, 299, 308–9, 354–55, 369, 452–56, 473, 477–80, 510, 511, 586–87, 623
- Advaita Vedanta, 51, 354, 393, 452–56, 477–80, 486–87, 512, 579–80, 582, 586–89, 615–16, 622–23, 626–27, 628, 639
- general teachings: on chastity, 396, 401, 442–43, 490, 547; on discipleship, 416, 418–19, 476, 523; on divine play, 408, 419, 528, 548–49, 591, 631, 651; on good and evil, 20, 108, 137, 196–97, 263, 311, 439, 455, 470–72, 487, 650; on the guru, 388, 402, 403, 405–7, 419, 476, 523, 597; on renunciation 195, 197, 406, 408, 469, 473, 523, 590–91, 596, 625; on strength, 566, 579, 595–96, 555–600, 621–23, 628, 630–32; on truth, 12–13, 387, 444, 615, 626, 631–32
- Vivekananda: A Biography* (Nikhilnanda), 14, 517, 641
- Vivekananda, a Biography in Pictures*, 102
- Vivekananda and His Work* (Abhedananda), 563–64
- Voice of India, The*, 342, 343, 344, 350, 452, 453
- Vrooman Brothers, 467
- Vyasa (Veda-Vyasa), 567, 575
- Waldo, Ellen, 58, 99–100, 108, 417, 558, 640; and SV in New York, 128–29, 634–35, 644, 656, 674
- and notes of SV’s talks: *Inspired Talks*, 612, 656; “The Worship of the Divine Mother,” 651
- and publication of SV’s books, 558, 667
- Wendte Hall. *See* Unitarian Church,* First, Oakland
- Western Vedanta movement, 632–40
- Wheeler, Mr. and Mrs., 142–43, 642 *
- White, Wilbur W. (YMCA secretary, Madras), 301
- Whitmarsh family, 100
- Whitmarsh, Theodore, 100, 677
- “Who Knows How Mother Plays,” 230–31
- Wiggin, Kate Douglas, 187
- Wimbledon, 51, 63, 68–69
- Wiseman (caretaker of California St. Home of Truth), 376, 445
- With the Swamis in America* (A Western Disciple [Atulananda]), 134, 521
- Wollberg, Albert S., 495–96, 514, 564, 603
- Wollberg, Mrs. Albert S., 495
- Wolska, Mlle de, 714–15, 715
- Women, 8, 10, 119, 173, 175, 575–76; Nivedita’s lecture on “Ideals of Hindu Women,” 647; to be looked upon as mother, 442; SV on Indian women, 201, 239–40
- Woods, Kate Tannatt, 188–89
- Woods Pasha (Jules Bois?), 746
- “Work without Motive,” 566
- World Teachers: needed as exemplars, 269–72; transmitters of power, 418–19; every man must be like, 582
- World’s Columbian Exposition, 690–91. *See also* Parliament of Religions

INDEX

- Wright, John Henry, 419
- Wyckoff, Carrie Mead (Lalita), 160–61, 218, 222, 227, 234–35, 665; and SV's pipe, 228–29; SV with, 229–32
- Wyckoff, Ralph, 221, 222, 223, 224, 231
- Yama, 387, 404
- Yatiswarananda, Swami, 77–78
- Yoga, 390, 464, 515, 589. *See also* Raja yoga; *Yoga Sutra*
- Yogas, four, 614–15; SV and, 588–89; all taught in first visit, 615, 628; raja yoga and jnana yoga stressed in second visit, 628–29
- harmonizing of: in the Gita, 574; accomplished by Sri Ramakrishna, 578; represented on seal of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, 675–76
- Yoga Sutra (Aphorisms)* of Patanjali, 399, 614, 616

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uplifted head
Behold their shackles
broken, and
Know, in springing joy,
their life renewed !'**

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